



**ASPIRATION DEVELOPMENT AMONG
RURAL YOUTH
CASE STUDY OF LICEO RURAL SÁMARA**

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Master's Thesis

Social and Public Policy

Development and International
Cooperation

Department of Social Sciences and
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ABSTRACT**Aspiration Development among Rural Youth****Case study of Liceo Rural Sámara**

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The aim of this thesis is to provide a preliminary analysis of the aspirations of rural youth in Sámara, Costa Rica and the factors influencing them. This study will supplement the existing literature on aspirations, while providing a new approach to this field. By assessing which factors are most influential to youth's development of aspirations this study hopes to provide information which can help to improve infrastructure for the development of aspirations in the future. The ultimate goal is to guide future structural changes to promote the development and realization of youth's aspirations. The study implements an actor-centered approach by utilizing questionnaire data gathered in the target community.

The questionnaire data has been analyzed and grouped by many different variables in order to yield the most in depth and accurate findings. The analysis of the data employs the key components of Capacity to Aspire and capital as a guide for analyzing the questionnaire responses. Through the grouping and classification of the data it became clear that further research would be necessary to produce more in depth findings. The current study should be viewed as a preliminary study of aspirations among rural youth. This study validates the findings of previous studies while contributing new insights about the array of factors affecting aspiration development. Most importantly this study brings to light the horizons which young aspirers must face and overcome.

A look into what resources should be developed within this rural community in order to foster the development and realization of aspirations is provided through the analysis of the data in this study. Possible avenues for future research which would help in the further development of theory and support for youth aspirations are also described.

KEY WORDS: Aspirations, social capital, rural, youth, development, Costa Rica

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Goals of the Study and Research Questions	3
1.2. A Brief Introduction to Costa Rica and the Research Site.....	3
1.3. Local Education	6
1.3.1. Public v. Private Schools.....	6
1.3.2. Rural Secondary Schools	8
2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH ABOUT ASPIRATIONS	11
2.1. Aspirations as Indicators of Future Attainments.....	11
2.2. Theoretical Concepts Affecting Aspiration Development	13
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	16
3.1. Capacity to Aspire	16
3.1.1. Roots in the Capability Approach.....	16
3.1.2. Background of theory	20
3.1.3. Defining terms	23
3.2. Individual Perceptions and their Construction	25
3.3. Capital.....	28
3.4. Value of Education	30
3.5. Criticism and Reflection	32
4. METHODOLOGY.....	34
4.1. Research Design.....	34
4.1.1. Data Collection and Sample.....	34
4.1.2. The Informants	34
4.2. Data Collection and Methods	35
4.2.1. Fieldwork	35
4.2.2. Questionnaire Design.....	36
4.3. Key Indicators of Aspiration Development.....	39
4.3.1. Capital	39
4.3.2. Future Aspirations.....	40
4.3.2 Family Values	40
4.4. Limitations of the Study.....	40

4.4. Ethical Considerations	42
5. DATA ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE FINDINGS	44
5.1. Descriptive Data Analysis	45
5.2. Data Analysis Results	48
5.3. Theoretical Grounding of Results	54
5.3.1. Developing Capacity to Aspire through Education	56
5.3.2. Overcoming Habitus and Adaptive Preference.....	57
5.3.3. Education as Capital.....	58
5.3.4. Value of Education as Indicator of Aspirations	60
6. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS	62
6.1. Summary of the Findings.....	62
6.2. Reinforcing the Past and Looking Toward the Horizons	62
7. CONCLUSIONS.....	70
7.1. Implications of the Findings	70
7.2. Recommendations for Further Study.....	71
REFERENCES	74
APPENDIX A.....	78

List of Tables

Table 1 Goal Type and Example Response	46
Table 2 Mother's Employment Status	49
Table 3 Aspiration Type and Parent's Education Level.....	59
Table 4 Percentage of Aspirers with Professional Parent	60
Table 5 Value of School by Percentage of Aspirers	60

Acronyms

CA	Capability Approach
CREAR	La Asociación CREAR (Creatividad, Arte y Responsabilidad Social)
CTA	Capacity to Aspire
INEC	El Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (National Institute of Statistics and Census)
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

1. INTRODUCTION

Pathways out of poverty and towards equality have been the focus of development studies for many years including many different fields of thought and opinions about how to accomplish these goals. There has been a recent trend in linking aspirations with poverty reduction and the development of these aspirations through educational opportunities (Ibrahim, 2011). While historically development has been viewed through a primarily economic standpoint, more recently there has been a shift towards sustainable development and human development. Therefore, studies focusing on youth development have become more and more common, especially in the field of educational studies. The view that education is a pathway to a better life is a view held by many, but what exactly about education is crucial for betterment? Some would argue that education is the only way to obtain valuable employment, while others believe that education holds an intrinsic value and this potential economic gain is only secondary, if important at all, to its true meaning. Others view education as more important for the space it provides for learning, while some have started to focus on the importance of out of school learning. Regardless what field of thought one ascribes to, it has been shown that exposure to a learning environment, such as a school, increases aspirations and that an increase in aspirations leads to a higher likelihood of goal achievement. This increase of aspirations is owed to a plethora of factors including family influence, peer group influence, teacher influence, evaluation of education, etc. (Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki, 2014; Ames, 2010; Hart, 2013). The purpose of this study is to better understand what shapes the aspirations of rural youth and what the aspirations of rural youth are. The importance of this data is the beginning of potential in-depth analyses which could impact future policy making. By finding out what shapes aspirations and what the most common aspirations are, an environment can be provided to foster the development of and fulfillment of these aspirations. By understanding what youth is striving to do and what they see as the most important conditions to strive for, we can develop support for the attainment of their aspirations.

The Capability Approach (CA) has been developed by several scholars to assess well-being without focusing only on economic indicators. While the CA is useful for assessing poverty it can also be applied to policy evaluations even among affluent countries (Robeyns, 2007, p. 94). In his writings on the CA, Sen (1993) makes a distinction between basic capabilities, which are those that are necessary for survival, and those capabilities that are important to other aspects of a fulfilled life (Robeyns, 2007, p. 95). In this study, the goal is not to focus on these basic capabilities, but rather the possible

functionings and fulfilled capabilities of the youth in this community. The CA explains that two people with the exact same capability sets would likely still end up with completely different functionings due to freedom of choice. This concept is central in the current study along with its counterparts, which limit one's personal freedom to choose, or agency. The undeniable effects of family influence and culture raise the question of to what extent actors actually enjoy the freedom to decide which achievements to pursue. This study keeps these ideas at the core and employs an actor centered approach. In doing so this study hopes to shed light on the most influential factors in youth decision making and to guide future policy decisions to increase the potential of youth to practice their own agency when deciding what their future orientation will be. As Appadurai (2004) asserts development is about the future and therefore aspirations for the future are crucial to it (p. 193).

The field of rural studies is growing alongside that of youth studies. While there have been many studies conducted comparing rural and urban youth, there are fewer which focus primarily on rural youth. In Costa Rica, a country that is mostly rural and has been working on developing their educational outreach to rural areas while battling inequality in education retention, these types of studies are particularly pertinent. Uncovering what rural youth aspire to and how they can reach those aspirations will shed light on the developments that need to be made. This study will supplement the existing scholarship about rural youth and their aspirations, while also providing insight into potential for future studies and policy development in Costa Rica and elsewhere. As information technology decreases the distance between rural and urban (UNICEF, 2013), it is becoming increasingly important to understand the needs and desires of rural communities in order to provide the necessary infrastructure to these areas. Through an actor centered approach, which uses concepts from CTA and theories of capital as indicators for assessing aspirations, this thesis will begin to uncover the types of aspirations present in rural Costa Rica and the factors which most affect them.

The following text will provide a review of theories related to aspirations and the factors which affect them starting from the basics of the Capacity to Aspire (CTA) and moving to concepts such as habitus and agency, capital, and the value of education. After providing a theoretical basis for the analysis of aspirations this thesis will cover the methods used to gather and analyze the data in this study and how these methods complement the theoretical approaches that are described. The findings of the current study will be analyzed in depth and in relation to the theoretical propositions and findings of past

research. Furthermore, this thesis will provide a look to the future and propositions on further studies to supplement the one at hand.

1.1. Goals of the Study and Research Questions

The present study hopes to gain understanding of the aspirations of the youth in this context by answering the following questions:

1. What are the aspirations of youth at Liceo Rural Sámara?
2. What most shapes and influences these aspirations?
3. What socioeconomic variables play a role in the development of aspirations?
4. What is the effect of these socioeconomic variables on aspirations?

In order to foster the development of, and attainment of, aspirations among rural youth we must first find out what the actual aspirations are among this group. In order to uncover what resources need to be developed in order to promote the development of aspirations, we must first understand how these aspirations are developed and in general what the aspirations of rural youth are. Through these questions the study hopes to identify cultural leanings, social norms and a glimpse into the opportunities that seem feasible within this community. The restrictions and limits of these aspirations are also important in understanding how these aspirations are shaped and therefore insight into the cultural norms of this society are pertinent. By first identifying what the youth of Sámara describe as their aspirations, we can then begin to analyze how to foster their aspirations and turn them into reality. Finding out what factors most influence aspiration development in this setting and what effect these factors have will allow us to identify the pathways for the promotion of aspiration development in the future.

1.2. A Brief Introduction to Costa Rica and the Research Site

Costa Rica's recent history has shown a significant shift from agricultural producer to other forms of revenue generation, such as tourism. This shift towards a tourism based economy has rendered great changes not only for the economy, but also the environment and societal norms. In 2016 Costa Rica made international news after running on green energy for over 100 days. This achievement is one reflection of the impacts of the values of Costa Ricans for the environment itself and for the environment as a new source of revenue. Costa Rica is a small country with great biodiversity due mainly to the fact that there are a plethora of ecosystems ranging from tropical dry forests, to cloud forests, to mangroves. This small country is nestled in between two beautiful and very different oceans providing a desirable place for any kind of ocean lovers. There are mountains,

volcanoes, crocodile infested rivers and hundreds of species of birds. It is no wonder Costa Rica has been able to harness the power of tourism with all of its natural beauty. These features, along with the stability of the country, have procured Costa Rica with one of the highest rates of foreign direct investment in Latin America, which contributes to the growth of the Costa Rican economy (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017).

Strong and positive relations with the United States have certainly had a positive impact on the growth of the Costa Rican economy. The US imports the highest amount of Costa Rica's goods from agricultural products to newer industrial production (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017). Furthermore, US tourists account for the highest share of all tourists visiting Costa Rica. They even accounted for twice as many tourists in Costa Rica than the neighboring country of Nicaragua in 2013 (Tourism Statistical Yearly Report, 2013). However, Costa Rica faces issues of supporting immigrants from Nicaragua who come for employment and social benefits (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017). These immigrants highlight one of the biggest problems impacting the Costa Rican economy, the informalization of labor (OECD, 2016). Many of the migrants from the surrounding countries end up working in the informal labor market due to low skills and/or education (OECD, 2016). The rest of the informal labor market is largely made up of Costa Ricans who have only primary education, or none at all (OECD, 2016). The OECD Economic Survey (2016) suggest that improvements in education would help move people into the formal labor force. There is a lack of skills based and vocational training; and educational inequalities are pronounced early on due to lack of access and equality of educational institutions (OECD, 2016). While Costa Rica spends a large percentage of their annual budget on education, the benefits are not distributed evenly and this is apparent in the labor force (OECD, 2016). Another major economic issue in Costa Rica is the underemployment of women which stems primarily from lack of public childcare facilities (OECD, 2016). There has been a global increase in female headed households and these households are the most likely to be impoverished (Chant, 2009), therefore policy changes need to be made to procure proportional involvement of women in the labor force. According to OECD (2016) the poverty rate in Costa Rica has been stable for about two decades it will not improve until a unified and evenly distributed policy of benefits and safety nets is employed in the nation. While Costa Rica has a notable structure of social services, which draws immigrants from surrounding countries, there is a lack of revenue to pay for these services (OECD, 2016). Therefore, while the Costa Rican economy is growing annually, so is the deficit. In order to remedy this growing deficit tax revenue collection from formal labor

must be overhauled (OECD, 2016). These problems and changes in the economy of Costa Rica have had a great impact on the poorest region in the nation, Guanacaste.

This thesis is based on fieldwork in the town of Sámara, in the Guanacaste region, which has undergone a great economic transformation in the last 20 years, shifting from major agricultural producer to a key tourist destination. The region of Guanacaste is punctuated by tourism and seasonal employment, and is still an important producer of key agricultural products. The region suffers from severe unemployment, while many of those who are employed suffer from the large market of seasonal employment (Chant, 2009). There is a notable difference in the amount of work available depending on the peaks of tourism season. The province of Guanacaste includes the poorest parts of the country according to 2011 statistics by INEC (2011) on the incidence of poverty. However, this region does not have a significantly high rate of youth who aren't attending formal education. Regardless, the rate is slightly higher for females than males, which is consistent with the entire nation (INEC, 2015). This suggests that the incidence of poverty is not affiliated with level of education. Therefore, in Guanacaste one is able to acquire a significant level of education and yet remain in poverty.

Guanacaste has been a key agricultural producer for Costa Rica, but just like the rest of the country it has started to harness the power of tourism. The region has a long coastline full of beautiful beaches with great surf and multiple national parks. Guanacaste is the region that is invested in the least in Costa Rica, as it is also the most sparsely populated area. The town of Sámara is located towards the southern end of the region, on the Pacific coast in the area known as the Nicoya Peninsula. Sámara has a total population of 2,603 (INEC Censo, 2000), which includes the neighboring area of El Torito, which is significant to this study, among others. The population is higher during the summer season when many expatriates, or temporary migrants, return to their beach homes for a few months of vacation. When walking down the main street in Sámara you will likely notice a line of surf shops and bars, as well as horses, dogs and cows walking along the road. It is easy to point out the main sources of revenue: livestock and tourism. Given the size of the town it is easy to imagine that there are not many opportunities for work, especially outside of these main industries. Due to this, it is not uncommon for people to work in a nearby town or even the bigger city of Nicoya which is about 45 minutes away by car. The difference in resources and opportunities between Sámara and Nicoya is drastic, from employment, to schools, to infrastructure. Nicoya is one of the major cities in the Guanacaste region and has multiple opportunities for post-primary education. However,

you don't even have to go that far from Sámara to find staunch differences in opportunities and infrastructure.

El Torito is a suburb of Sámara and is the community where the questionnaire was administered. It is only a few kilometers from Sámara, but has noticeable differences in terms of the socioeconomic level of the residents. An important infrastructural problem, which affects much of Costa Rica and especially Guanacaste, is the lack of bridges. The bridge connecting the road from Sámara to El Torito is only a few years old. Something as simple as this bridge might be one of the reasons for the large gap between Sámara and El Torito. Access to other towns, especially during rainy season, would have been very difficult in the past. Even now, one of the main roads leading out of Sámara to multiple other towns does not have a bridge. When the road meets the crocodile infested river, it seems your options are to either swim across, take a boat, or drive about 40km out of your way and through a different town. The local secondary school which serves Sámara and its suburbs is located in El Torito. Now that there is a bridge access to the school by bus, or other means of transport, is more feasible. El Torito could be considered a lower income area of Sámara and does not provide much, if anything, in terms of tourism. El Torito is surrounded on both sides by communities which provide everything from hostels to nice resorts and restaurants and the economic impacts are visible. There are educational outreach programs from Sámara which operate in El Torito in hopes to provide better opportunities to the kids at the local elementary school as well as their parents. The issues impacting the schools in this area are reinforced by the lack of infrastructure and services in the neighborhood.

1.3. Local Education

Costa Rica's education system has improved drastically during the last decade and the government continues to focus on structural improvements to increase the quality of education. While Costa Rica offers public primary and secondary education at no cost the nation's large rural population is at a disadvantage when it comes to high quality educational opportunities.

1.3.1. Public v. Private Schools

With the influx of immigrants that now populate Sámara have come new private schools. One of the private schools is located in the heart of Sámara, Mareas International Homeschool, a bilingual school which boasts the possibility to provide students with a transcript accepted by the US and any country who accepts US transcripts. Just outside of

the center is Sámara Pacific School, another private, bilingual school. Both schools have been formed by expats from the US who have moved to Sámara and are hoping to provide a high level of education to the community. However, many families cannot afford to send their children to a school that isn't free as are Costa Rican public schools. Also in the city center you find the public elementary school with no air conditioning and an open air environment, just like the public elementary school in El Torito and the public high school in El Torito. This public high school serves all of the small neighborhoods and towns surrounding Sámara as the next high school is in Nicoya (45 minutes away).

This study is based on a questionnaire administered to students from the public secondary school in El Torito, so why the mention of the private schools? The private schools in Sámara highlight the inequalities that are faced in youth education in the area. Some of the main issues observed during the data collection period were school cancellations and class cancellations. Since the data for this study was collected while working with a non-profit after-school program, the student's schedules were easily observed. The after school program was held at the El Torito community center, adjacent to the elementary school. The students at this school had a schedule where every other day half of the students went in the morning and half went in the afternoon, as to prevent only a certain group from having early morning classes. Ideally what this meant for the after school program was that the students who had morning class on that given day would show up to the program and the ones who had afternoon classes would not. However, there were multiple days that upon arrival to the community center it was clear that the students were not attending class that day. These days off were not national holidays or days that were scheduled to be so. Similarly one high school girl who attended the Las Divinas program regularly told our director in a casual conversation that she did not have class every other Tuesday because her professor was undergoing some medical treatments and there was no one who could cover her class. This example reveals the lack of resources within the community and the appeal for private education. While public schools suffer from class cancellations, private ones ran normally. Another huge problem in the public school system is in the way that progression through the grades is dealt with. In order to move from one grade to the next, in the secondary school phase, a student must pass end of the year exams for each subject. Each student has three opportunities to pass the exams and if they are still unable to do so, they must repeat whichever subjects they did not pass, at that grade level. For example, if a student in the seventh grade were to fail the mathematics exam all three times, they would then have to repeat seventh grade math, rather than

moving onto eighth grade math. However, while this student repeats seventh grade math they are not able to continue on to other eighth grade level courses in other subjects. This results in a student spending one year attending only one class for one subject before they can move on to the subsequent grade level. A student who was going through a similar experience during the research period reported that they had much less motivation to attend school when they only had one class to attend.

School cancellations happen all the time due to soccer games or the inability to find a substitute teacher. There is very little accountability for whether students are actually making it to school or not. Especially in El Torito, the difference between students of the same age can be absolutely staggering. One of the students who attends the after-school program is about 10 years old and cannot read or write; she cannot even write her own name. This is not a typical case as most of her classmates were much more advanced than her. These types of differences do, however, point to the types of resources that are lacking. When a student falls behind, for whatever reason, there is no chance to give them extra support in their education. This student in particular comes from a very rough background and all of her siblings, thus far, have had similar scholastic experiences. The lack of resources and consistency in the school system also translate to negative learned behaviors among the kids.

These shortcomings of the local schools impact the potential of students to successfully complete their education and to formulate well-rounded aspirations for the future. These types of problems likely stem from the rurality of the schools and the lack of structure in the rural secondary school system. Liceo Rural Sámará, like many other rural secondary schools is a new school and one which needs to be observed and studied for future development of rural curriculum and educational policy. This system of rural secondary schools will be described in depth in the following section to highlight the importance of development in this sector of Costa Rican education.

1.3.2. Rural Secondary Schools

Almost one third of Costa Rican students are classified as rural according to the national census, which means that issues facing rural schools and students have a great impact on the nation as a whole (INEC, 2015). While rural schools tend to have smaller classes, they also tend to have much more limited access to technology and other resources (Byun et al., 2012). An investment in rural youth would yield great economic and social benefits for the whole nation. Before going deeper into the makings of this study it is important to define this term which is used in the title and throughout the study itself. The

word rural, and the concept of rurality has many meanings depending on the context, so it is important to set a baseline meaning for this study. The Costa Rican census defined rural areas in a different, but no more definitive manner, describing them as “those towns which aren’t located in the urban area” and have “a predominance of agricultural activities” (INEC, 2011, p. 133). This definition leaves the classification of Sámara up in the air since there is very little data on Sámara’s economic activities without relation to the rest of Nicoya. Considering that there is a significant amount of agricultural activity in Sámara and UNICEF’s inclusion of this particular school in their study of rural schools in Costa Rica (UNICEF, 2013, p. 26) this study will classify Sámara and the relevant surrounding towns as rural. The significance of this classification is to contribute to the research specifically on aspirations within a rural setting. While there is plenty of existing research about aspirations in rural and urban settings, there are not so many studies which involve an actor centered approach such as this, and especially not in assessing youth. This study hopes to contribute new knowledge specifically about rural youth and their aspirations.

The system of *liceos rurales*, or rural secondary schools, took shape after finding significant problems with the system of *telesecundarias*, or virtual secondary schools. The system of virtual schools was put into place in Costa Rica in 1998 in hopes to provide education, in an effective manner, to rural areas of the country (Cabezas, 2013). Unfortunately the ministry of education realized many problems with this model and began the transformation of *telesecundarias* to *liceos rurales*. By 2013 only 32 of 140 *telesecundarias* remained, with the intent that all would slowly be converted to *liceos rurales* based on demand (Cabezas, 2013). The 2017 plan for education includes a plan to continue the conversion of some remaining *telesecundarias* (MEP, 2017). During the time of the UNICEF (2013) study, most of the administrators of the schools were temporary because their creation was so recent, and the principal at Liceo Rural Sámara has since changed. In general, rural secondary schools don’t have more than 100 students and have a rather precarious, or at least simplistic, infrastructure (UNICEF, 2013). These schools also have a varying level of difficulty in ease of access; most lack computer and internet access, alongside a lack of arts education (UNICEF, 2013). Liceo Rural Sámara, in particular, does not suffer from the issues of ease of access by students, but does have significant issues with internet access (UNICEF, 2013). Being that Sámara is a tourist town the prices at internet cafes are quite high, which poses an expenditure for students who might need, or want, internet access for school related work.

Considering the newness of this system of rural secondary schools and the need for data about what is and is not working, this study is a pertinent step and addition to the UNICEF (2013) study. In the UNICEF (2013) study they found the most important improvements for liceos rurales will be to incorporate more community specific programs and obtain more training for teachers. This study is a great starting point for analyzing the system of rural secondary schools. In order to assess what resources should be developed we must take into account what rural youth want from life. Understanding the aspirations of rural youth and the factors that influence them will allow for future policy to be implemented in the most effective way.

2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH ABOUT ASPIRATIONS

The following section will present a brief review of the current research on youth aspirations specifically focusing on rural youth. Five studies will be discussed, each with slightly different starting points and conclusions. These five studies highlight five distinct ways in which the topic of rural youth aspirations has been tackled and introduce many of the common assumptions of youth aspirations. Each study employs a different theoretical framework which has influenced the field of aspirations. The first two studies take place in the United States, while the latter three take place in Nigeria, Egypt, and Tanzania, respectively.

2.1. Aspirations as Indicators of Future Attainments

Studies of rural youth aspirations stem from the observed inequalities between rural and urban educational opportunities around the world. Rural youth are often viewed as disadvantaged in their access to educational and employment opportunities which can have a significant effect on aspirations and aspiration development. While being enrolled in school places these youth in a position of advantage, their opportunities are not necessarily equal to other youth and therefore their experiences form part of an important field of studies (Posti-Ahokas and Palojoiki, 2012). Bajema, Miller and Williams (2012) identify the aspirations, and their barriers, of rural students in the United States through the lens of achievement motivation and social comparison theories. Education can support aspiration development by providing a network of peers and teachers who contribute positively to future aspirations, and by giving youth a positive comparative network whom they might aspire to emulate (Bajema, Miller and Williams, 2012, p.63). The study finds that the sample has a wide array of aspirations in many professional fields and that the biggest barrier to aspiration attainment is a lack of future job opportunities within their community. Most of the respondents felt that they had a good support system for aspiration development and realization, and therefore reported low barriers. However, the study also found that many respondents felt a push and pull of aspiring to higher education and careers outside of their community, but also wanting to remain in their community (Bajema, Miller and Williams, 2012, p.70). Similarly Byun et al. (2012) found that rural students had conflicting aspirations for wanting to remain in their community, but also having aspirations which could only be realized elsewhere, whether this be due to education institutions or career opportunities. However, in this latter study the analysis of aspirations was based on the social capital of the family and the school. Byun et al. (2012)

found that students whose parents and teachers have higher expectations for them are more likely to have higher educational aspirations. For example, students whose parents want them to attend college are more likely to aspire to attend college. In this study the findings point to the importance of social capital over socio economic status revealing that family size and free lunch status were not important in shaping aspirations, but rather parent's level of education was very important (Byun et al., 2012). Both of these studies highlight the socio economic changes which are reshaping rural areas specifically in the United States. Higher concentrations of jobs and educational institutions can be found in urban areas, causing rural youth to have to always consider relocation for aspiration attainment (Byun et al., 2012). Due to this conflict Byun et al. (2012) found that students with weaker family ties are more likely to have higher aspirations, and that rural youth in general are more likely to have conflicting aspirations. While these two studies use prior theoretical postulations to guide their studies, the following researcher uses a theoretical framework to develop a new way to analyze aspirations.

Meanwhile, Osuji (1976) analyzes the effects of family occupations and social status in the development of aspirations. Most interestingly Osuji (1976) finds that the aspirations of the sample are not limited to their immediate family and/or surroundings. The study results in a postulation that due to the structure of the society people are able to draw inspiration from sources that had not been studied in depth previously. Osuji (1976) infers that the respondents have reference groups outside of their immediate family and outside of their local community which help foster aspirations that are well outside of their current social class and spatial setting. This study provided new insights in its time as previous studies in 'western' states had yielded conflicting results, which lends probability to the fact that the culture and structure of the society impacts the limits of the aspirer.

Ibrahim (2011) analyzes the correlation between aspirations, well-being and poverty through the use of the CA. Aspirations have become central in policy discussions as a key to guide people out of poverty by development of them through education (Ibrahim, 2011, p. 6). Ibrahim (2011) brings to the forefront the importance of unattainable aspirations and the implications these have for a person's well-being particularly in due to the cyclical manner of failed aspirations. Failed aspirations of parents lead to failed aspirations for their children and reinforce the intergenerational transmission of aspiration failure and oftentimes also poverty (Ibrahim, 2011, p. 16). Ibrahim (2011) sets out to remind us that the CA and the study of aspirations should always include those which are unattainable in order to start to identify and overcome these barriers to

aspirations. This study places aspirations at the core of poverty alleviation and the postulates that failed aspirations are a pertinent causal factor of poverty. Therefore, Ibrahim (2011) highlights the importance of developing realistic aspirations in order to not fall into the cycle of failed aspirations and poverty. This study has at its core a more economically disadvantaged group than the previous two studies and in this case the subjects of study are not only youth, but people who have faced failed aspirations. Ibrahim (2011) focuses mainly on the failed aspirations to find out what causes these failures, rather than the actual aspirations of the informants. This study brings to the forefront a different perspective for which aspects of aspirations should be and are being studied. Ibrahim (2011) challenges the notion of many other studies that look mainly at actual aspirations and the factors affecting them.

The final study discusses aspirations in an urban setting and in relation to school transitions in a challenging context. Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki (2014) find that the value placed on education and schooling is crucial in guiding the future orientations that youth develop in regard to education. The results of this study show the high value placed on education to provide a better future through better career opportunities and the intrinsic value that an educated person holds (Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki, 2014, p. 677). While this study looks at urban youth it provides an interesting perspective of the weight placed on value that the previous studies did not employ. Similarly to Ibrahim (2011) this study does not simply look at what the aspirations of youth are, but rather analyzes educational transitions and the value of education by looking at youth's aspiration. Again this study places aspirations in a slightly different role than many previous studies have.

Overall, it is evident that the study of aspirations can be approached from many different angles. Aspirations are an influential factor for youth's future attainment, for poverty alleviation, and for successful transitions to adulthood and further educational opportunities. Previous studies have analyzed aspirations through many different theoretical viewpoints and by placing aspirations in different roles. By combining ideologies from the aforementioned the current study will attempt to supplement and emulate these studies to provide yet another perspective in the field of youth aspirations.

2.2. Theoretical Concepts Affecting Aspiration Development

The studies reviewed in the previous section have resulted in different findings about youth aspirations due to the difference in context as well as the different theoretical concepts employed in analyzing the data. The findings of Bajema, Miller and Williams

(2012) and Osuji (1976) are similar in that they both relate higher youth aspirations to broader reference groups. Both studies find that youth are able to use networks of friends, family, teachers, or other people as sources of inspiration for their aspirations. Specifically Osuji (1976) postulates that these networks can be external to their immediate family, surroundings, and communities, therefore allowing youth to pull influence from somewhat distant sources. These reference groups play a similar role to family social capital which is discussed in the study by Byun et al. (2012). This concept of family social capital can be extended to include the network the family has developed within their community as well as within their own family. As Byun et al. (2012) discover family social capital can impact youth in many different ways. On the one hand higher social capital tends to lead to heightened aspirations however, strong ties among family members can impede the realization of aspirations as many rural youth face the necessity for relocation in order to achieve their goals. This relocation can be due to lack of jobs or educational opportunities within their community. Alongside the concept of capital are those of individual choice, voice, and habitus. These concepts are all influenced by societal factors and help to explain the influence that one's surroundings have on their future orientations.

On the other hand Ibrahim (2011) and Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki (2014) approach the study of aspirations from a completely different viewpoint and do not focus primarily on what the aspirations of these youth are. Ibrahim (2011) focuses primarily on the effects of failed aspirations and their relation to poverty. Although the connection is not explained in Ibrahim's (2011) study, it seems that this focus on the failure of aspirations relates to Appadurai's (2004) claim that aspiring is something that must be practiced. In order to develop realistic and useful aspirations one must be able to understand and practice the necessary steps to realizing their aspirations. Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki (2014) focus on the value that youth give to education and expand upon the pertinence of the value of education in future orientation.

Ultimately the first three studies approach aspirations through a focus on capital in one way or another. The studies analyze the importance of networks and connections that youth have made and how these impact youth in developing aspirations. The concept of capital and the different types of capital have been discussed by many scholars in the past. The following chapter will provide an in depth discussion of the relevant concepts of capital that have been used in these three studies and the ones which will be employed in the current study. Similarly the concept of individual choice and its relation to one's surroundings will be discussed, as well as the potential role it plays in aspiration

development. On the other hand the latter two studies introduce concepts of failed aspirations and value of education as being key players in the study of aspirations. The following chapter will provide an analysis of CTA and how it relates to failed aspirations, alongside a description of the importance of the value that people place on education. These previous studies have helped to uncover four different factors which affect the development of aspirations and by combining and relation these four concepts to one another this study hopes to provide a new outlook on the study of aspirations.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The search for an ideal educational system is far from over in contemporary socio-political studies. There are many studies and fields of thought focusing on how to examine educational systems in the most thorough and effective manner. This chapter will provide a review of relevant social theories and their relation to potential educational research and theorization. These theories have helped to guide this study by highlighting the concepts of importance within an analysis of education aspirations. Beginning with the capacity to aspire and its relation to the CA we will explore the weight of which means and opportunities are available to students, divulge into the concept of aspirations and more pointedly Appadurai's analysis of the capacity to aspire. Supplementing the CA and CTA the following section will review Bourdieu's theorizations in relation to habitus and social capital and how these two components matter a great deal in a student's future orientations. The subsequent section will introduce the theories surrounding value of education and what role this plays in aspiration building. Finally some criticisms of the theories at hand will be discussed alongside their impacts on the study.

3.1. Capacity to Aspire

First, it may simply be that individuals use their peers (or near-peers) to form comparisons, invidious or otherwise, because that's just the way people are. I might use the standards and achievements of other economists, or those of other Indian academics, or perhaps academics in my age group, as a basis for forming my aspirations. But I'm unlikely to call on the experiences of Bill Gates or Madonna: they're just too far away from who I am. (Ray, 2002, p. 2)

3.1.1. Roots in the Capability Approach

It hopes to dismantle the goods based economic evaluations of well-being Amartya Sen developed the Capability Approach (CA) which attempts to analyze each person, or society, based on what choices these individuals how and how well they are able to pursue these options. The CA could be very useful to development policy planning by offering an alternative way to measure well-being among people through a normative framework. Rather than using traditional indicators such as GDP to determine whether a country is thriving or not, CA evaluates the actual achievements of the people of a nation in comparison with the opportunities they have. Sen's premise with developing this approach was to respond to the inadequacies of utilitarianism and welfare economics and specifically

to adapt the tradition views within these approaches where the individual is forgotten within the sum of a society (Nambiar, 2010, p. 13). The aspects that are particularly troubling to Sen in the original conceptualization of welfare economics and utilitarianism will be described in brief.

First of all the focus on distributive efficiency, or the distribution of goods to the people who can make the most of them, is posed as problematic (Yew Kwang, 2015; Nambiar, 2010). This concept inherently fosters inequalities and puts those who are already deprived in a position of further disadvantage. Secondly, the core of utilitarianism only assesses the outcomes of behaviors rather than the pathways to these outcomes (Werner et al., 2008; Nambiar, 2010). This framework dismisses the importance of the viable pathways people have and the contextual circumstance which either promote or inhibit the successes of the individual. Thirdly, Sen posits that the pure focus on utility information for judging the goodness of a state is highly problematic in utilitarianism (Werner et al., 2008; Nambiar, 2010). By focusing only on the economic usefulness of a state of being the analysis that transpires lacks qualities that are essential to the well-being of an individual. The lack of assessment of individual happiness, fulfillment, etc. are insufficient in assessing well-being from Sen's perspective (Nambiar, 2010, p. 15). The incorporation of ethics, individual values, and choice into development economics are essential to the CA, alongside an assessment and understanding the adaptation that the deprived undergo to accept their standard of living (Nambiar, 2010, p. 15). Evaluations of how people perceive their own realities and of what goods or services can and cannot increase their well-being are essential in Sen's theorization. This new perspective hopes to overcome the typical strategies for assessing well-being by focusing on the individual and what their potential is. The CA has a wide reaching impact from its influence on the Human Development Report administered by the UNDP, to the potential to shape policy in many nations.

In order to explain the implementation of the CA as a means of assessing this study the approach will first be reviewed in detail. One of the core concepts in the CA is that of functionings, which are the actual achievements of a person, while a person's capabilities, on the other hand, are unevenly distributed and limit a person's possible achievements (Sen, 2006, p. 440). These capabilities are the freedom a person has to set achievement goals and act upon those (Robeyns, 2007). Therefore in order to achieve functionings, for example completing high school, one must first have the capability to attend high school. This is where we begin to see how capabilities are limited, or unevenly distributed.

Capabilities limit possible achievements because they are the actual opportunities needed to achieve a functioning. One cannot possibly complete high school if they do not have access to such a school. Keeping in line with the literature on the capability approach the basic frame describes functions as achieved capabilities, while capabilities are “structural opportunity sets” (Conradie [lecture], 2.5.2016). These capabilities differ from personal abilities and are split into two categories: well-being and agency. An example of a capability and function falling under the well-being category would be healthcare. The differentiation between capability and function comes in that the function could be something as simple as having or have not received a vaccination, whereas the capability then refers to the structural limitations/assistances to the aforementioned such as free healthcare. Of course these examples only illustrate one of the many potential functionings one might hope to achieve, and while a person is able to achieve a combination of the functionings set forth by them self, based of course on their capabilities, there is always an element of choice which comes into play during goal setting and achievement. This element of choice highlights the importance of the possible alternatives, the possible functionings, which are available to a person. The decision one takes when choosing between alternative functionings is known as personal agency. Agency refers to the structures of personal decision making and to what extent one has the freedom to this. It can be described as the valuable and premeditated action an individual takes while pursuing a goal or social opportunity (Robeyns, 2007) or the ability to act on the things one values/desires (Alkire, 2005).

Once the basic concept of these terms is understood it is equally important to understand that which limits each of them. As Walker (2006) asserts in her article, relating capability approach and social justice, it is a mistake to judge achievement based purely on the basis of personal choice, we have to also consider the capabilities available to each individual. The capability to health for example may be limited by many different aspects either structural, socio-cultural or personal (Conradie, 2013, p. 194). Some factors, which effect with how resources are converted into functionings, may not be under the control of the agent, nor directly subject to agency, and these are called conversion factors. They may refer to race, sex, language, citizenship, etc. (Robeyns, 2007).

As Robeyns (2007) describes the core ideas of CA lie in the idea that each individual is exposed to certain capability sets based on their spatial and socio-economic standing (p. 99). Conversion factors determine how easily people can convert the good and services they are provided with into actual functionings, or achievements (Robeyns, 2007,

p. 99). These conversion factors can be personal, social and environmental; but beyond these factors a person's overall circumstance defines their capability sets and how easily they can convert the available capabilities into functionings (Robeyns, 2007, p. 99). This means that people have limited ability to achieve certain things, often times due to factors that they themselves cannot influence.

Another source of limits is directly related to personal agency. The adaptive preference problem is cited by many CA scholars and explained as the phenomenon when people adapt their preferences (aspirations, dreams, goals) to a lower standard due to societal or personal pressures (Conradie, 2013). These adaptive preferences staunchly limit aspirations and therefore capabilities. There may be many reasons that adaptive preferences are adapted, whether it be structural obstacles or traditional values. The concept of adaptive preferences stemming from Sen and Nussbaum seemed to be reflected in the local society. Adaptive preferences in their most simple explanation are the set of preferences which an individual accepts as normal, based on what they believe they can attain (Hart, 2013, p. 24).

Returning to the concept of agency being culturally influence, CA defines the concept of adaptive preference as the adaptation of personal preference based on socialization or resignation (Teschl and Comim, 2007). This means that in certain situations people modify their perceived functionings based on their real capabilities. Hart (2012) posits that before making a choice, people take into account "what they can afford, the likely responses of others to their choice and the values and practices which shape them and the communities in which they live" (p. 24). In regard to resignation, adaptive preference can be defined as an individual's restricted view of the world causing them to abandon possible functionings due to the perceived impossibility of their attainment (Hart, 2012, p. 24). In relation to the adaptive preference of CA, Bourdieu explores a similar concept explaining that people do not constantly adjust their aspirations based on chances of success, but rather have demands that have been preadapted based on observations of probability and personal aspirations (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 54). "The most improbable practices are therefore excluded" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 54). This theorization is discussed in relation to habitus, which will be explored in more depth in a subsequent section, however it will be logical to add that Bourdieu describes habitus as producing only those options which would be acceptable within the limits of socio-cultural norms and regulations. Those options which would likely be viewed as constructive would remain plausible, while those which might produce an adverse response would be excluded (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 55-

56). Both Sen (1990) and Nussbaum (2000) have discussed the cultural constraints that affect women's preferences and influence their aspirations.

This idea of agency has been explored in relation to goal setting and future planning by youth and described as "culturally influenced" (Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki, 2014, p. 666). This cultural influence can be related to the concept of capability, once again, in that only certain opportunities are actually feasible, sometimes based on what has been constructed as a social norm. Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki (2014) deem agency to be crucial for development and planning for the future, as youth should be exploring and probing potential future opportunities. The idea that adaptive preferences play a role in youth goal setting and potentially limit one's agency is key in this study. While Sen and his work with CA are focusing on the expansion of capabilities and agency in order to improve a person's well-being, this study is focusing on analyzing the potential constraints which must be overcome before one has the opportunity to pursue capabilities through an analysis of aspirations.

3.1.2. Background of theory

Appadurai (2004) expands upon Sen's theory by relating capabilities to aspirations in hopes to include culture in the dialogue between capabilities, capacities and well-being. The central role of culture in Appadurai's (2004) description of aspirations is what makes it particularly applicable in this instance. Culture should not only be thought of as a limitation to aspirations, but rather an instigator for the types of aspirations that are formed. As Appadurai (2004) insists, culture is inseparable in the study of aspirations. One's culture has an undeniable influence in their future orientations and therefore to assess the aspirations of a group without considering the effects of this essential component would be inadequate. Whether one chooses to run from tradition or cling to their traditional cultural values they are still being influenced by the culture around them. Appadurai (2004) stresses the idea of aspirations and their link to culture, he asserts that aspirations are highly linked to culture and social life and that they cannot be purely individual, they are derived from something learned (p. 187). Appadurai (2004) explains that it is important to foster a capacity to aspire and expand upon those set, or traditional, aspirations. He suggests that much like capabilities there is an uneven distribution of the capacity to aspire (CTA), that those who are in oppressed or disadvantaged groups have less resources for developing aspirations (Appadurai, 2004). In other words these people have a smaller pool of potential aspirations to aspire to, they are limited, not by their own choices, but by what they are familiar with.

Sen (1990) and Appadurai (2004) have not invented any new concepts, but have rather tried to reshape the way these concepts are assessed and thought about in the study of well-being and aspirations. Fields of thought focusing on human well-being and the appropriate factors to account for have existed long before Sen. And the concept of aspirations and the act of aspiring has existed for much longer than Appadurai. However, these two scholars are trying to remind us the importance of the individual context in any analysis. The factors surrounding each person make their circumstances, and therefore their assessments and actions, unique.

Due to spatial and socio-economic conditions certain people will not aspire to certain things. Appadurai (2004) also describes aspirations as being heavily influenced by culture and society (p. 187) while also being unevenly distributed (p. 188). These assumptions propose multiple limits to aspirations and if we are trying to increase the CTA we must somehow circumvent both of these obstacles. The concept that aspirations are influenced by society ties aspirations into culture, which makes it a multifaceted concept. How can we increase the capacity to aspire without positing that modernity should trump tradition? The core of a person's aspirations is derived from what they view as normal and possible, and from the opportunities that they have observed to be successful and plausible. The second point about the uneven distribution of aspirations is another one which is difficult to address, Appadurai (2004) explains that the wealthy have a greater capacity to aspire, because they have greater access to trial and error, and to linking their life to a broader social context (p. 188). The more understanding and exposure one has to different pathways of achieving goals, the more likely one is to set these goals and find them feasible.

The CTA is something that must be repeated and honed in order for it to develop and become a pertinent part of any culture or society, therefore the less opportunity people have to develop and explore aspirations, and the less advanced it remains (Appadurai, 2004, p. 189). The more resources one has for trial and error, the more likely they are to develop and test aspirations (Appadurai, 2004, p. 189). Just as Appadurai asserts that the development of aspirations is dependent upon a person's social status and access to resources Ray (2002) expands upon this idea by introducing the concept of the "aspirations window" to refer to the zone of attainable aspirations that a person develops by observing that which surrounds them. This mirrors what Appadurai (2004) has explained that people are exposed to different opportunities and different resources which they can use to promote their own development. This formation of what is attainable and what is not is

also deemed by spatial and socio-economic conditions, Ray (2002) explains that the more mobility a person has the wider the breadth of what they deem attainable. The development of aspirations and what a person considers as an attainable aspiration is affected by what they observe around them. “There is no experience quite as compelling as the experience of your immediate family, and more broadly, those in your socio-economic and spatial neighborhood.” (Ray, 2002, p. 7) While the two scholars agree that aspirations are dependent upon spatial and socio-economic standing, and that class differences can determine which aspirations are deemed attainable, and which aren’t, there is still a need for heterogeneity in socio-economic status in order for aspirations to be challenged and heightened. In order for a person to aspire to something new and different from what they are, they must be able to observe people within their “aspirations window” doing new and different things (Ray, 2002, p. 4). Therefore, as stated previously, heterogeneity and a mixed society will produce more realistic, attainable, aspirations. Ideally people who have already attained a certain set of aspirations, for example the upper class, should be relating with and exchanging with those who have not yet done so, in order to maintain transparency of the stepping stones required to attain these aspirations. If class differences exist without the relatability between classes aspirations will seem unattainable as the differences will seem too great to overcome (Ray, 2002, p. 4).

The importance of CTA and the development of it is to provide better opportunities for the future and possibility for an individual to practice freedom and voice. Appadurai (2004) describes CTA as supporting the capabilities described by Sen (and Nussbaum), by placing them on a spectrum of attainment (p. 193). CTA allows a person to exercise their other capabilities and find ways to create access to ones which aren’t readily available. CTA helps in the development of realistic end goals, which can be attained through the use of other capabilities, and which can lead the way to harnessing new capabilities. The key in developing CTA should then be to test aspirations and find the ones which are practical and attainable and the ones which will pave the path towards important capabilities. The core of aspirations lies in the culture that one perceives, so its development should rely on linking culture with future orientations. In order to harness and legitimize the value of culture, aspiration development should be contextual and take local culture into consideration. Aspirations should not be universal and generalized, their value and attainability lies within their context. Even though the aspiration to ideals such as “the good life” or “to become someone” are universal, their composition is based on cultural context (Appadurai, 2004, p. 194). The components which make up a positive future is

certainly different within each community, and even each individual. The parts of life which hold the most value are not universal norms and therefore the aspiration to have a better future is not necessarily the same for the people in different contexts. The pathways to attain aspirations are even more varying as people's access to goods and services differ greatly around the globe, as does their access to understanding the pathways to attain certain aspirations. As has been stated previously, one of the keys to CTA is the repetition and testing of the pathways to attainment, and the resources one has to do these things will determine which paths they are willing to test. The failures one experiences personally or witnesses in other's lives will impact their evaluation of the potential and pertinence of certain aspirations.

3.1.3. Defining terms

At the core of CTA are the concepts of aspiring, culture and voice. Each of these plays an important role in defining CTA and understanding how it can be developed. Therefore, the following section will briefly discuss each of these concepts as it relates to the study at hand.

“Aspiring is different, but related to imagining. Aspiration is goal-oriented and concerns the future of the self.” (Hart, 2013, p. 79) It can be seen as a functioning (a state of being or doing), or a capability (which individuals enjoy to different degrees). Aspirations can be seen as a gateway to enabling future functionings and capabilities and that is why the oppression of aspirations can be so detrimental to the future. The functioning and capability of aspiring are different, the freedom one has to aspire to things which may be outside of the social norms is their capability to aspire, while their ability to achieve these aspirations is the functioning. Ray (2001) goes further to say that aspirations are multidimensional, that people may not only aspire to have a better life, but also more abstract ideals for example religious dominance. Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki (2014) review a substantive amount of studies which relate aspirations and educational achievements. On the one hand aspirations are heightened by higher personal investment in education, while on the other aspirations are an indicator of future education achievement and social mobility (Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki, 2014, p. 666). Heightened aspirations can help one to overcome their socio-economic status. Contrary to the positive correlation between education and aspirations Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki (2014) also cite examples of a negative relationship between the two. While education has shown to heighten aspirations in some circumstances this has a negative result as aspirations become unrealistic. When structural constraints impede the fulfillment of an aspiration a sense of failure is procured

(Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki, 2014, p. 666). Many times the prospect of educational opportunities begin to change the traditional aspirations within a community, leading to problems when there aren't real pathways to fulfill these new aspirations.

So, the capability one has to aspire is enjoyed to a different extent based on their level of freedom (Hart, 2013). While someone may have a symbolically limited range of aspirations, they still do have some aspirations. This is the key difference between the functioning and capability of aspirations. Many scholars posit that aspirations are socially grounded (Appadurai, 2004; Ray, 2003; Ibrahim, 2011), which means that they are dependent on the social norms surrounding them. This is significant because it relates the formation and pursuance of capabilities back to society meaning that society plays a key role in both of these aspects. Appadurai (2004) takes this notion even further by explaining that the more polarized a society is, the fewer aspirations are achieved. He explains that this is due to fewer linkages in between members of different social classes, giving those from lower classes less opportunities to pursue their aspirations, while on the other hand the opposite is true in a more connected society (Appadurai, 2004).

The components that affect one's CTA faces are not only structural, but also cultural. At the core of ones desires lie the leanings of the norms that they have accepted through their socialization in culture. The futures and actions one deems rational and acceptable are shaped by what they observe and what they have learned to value. Aspirations follow these limits and are shaped by societal pressures. As the world becomes more interconnected there is a new search for culture and tradition and the lines have become more intermingled and ambiguous, yet it is impossible to say that a person's opinions and future orientations would not be shaped by those who are in close proximity to them. Just as people learn behaviors and language through contact with people and objects, their aspirations are shaped in a similar way.

Voice is considered key in CTA and development in general. The potential that one has to make themselves heard and to participate in society depends on their practice of voice. By developing CTA one is able to develop their voice and potentially position themselves in a more favorable place within society. Just as aspirations are formed as part of one's context, so too occurs the development of voice. By creating a culture which values CTA and the possibility to create your own future a society, and the individual, are able to develop their voice. Voice is important collectively and individually and it is a key component in demanding change, even if this change is as simple as new horizons for aspirations.

3.2. Individual Perceptions and their Construction

The choices made and values upheld by any individual are undeniably linked to their connection with the world around them. While people certainly practice free will and the CA highlights the importance of the concept of individual choice and agency, the ability to choose and attain the goals that one most value, the effects of society and the formation of adaptive preferences limits the practice of agency. Bourdieu (1990) discusses the same idea in depth through his concept of habitus, although his conceptualization is more closely related to class than agency is in CA. As discussed in section 3.1. adaptive preferences are caused by a person's socialization and what they come to accept as their potential, while Bourdieu (1990) explains that the norms within a person's social class produce the habitus and this determines future perceptions and evaluations (54). Although Bourdieu is discussing class more directly, both concept have the same idea at their core. Habitus is influenced by, and formed by, the norms of a person's society and agency is directly influenced by societal norms.

The concept of adaptive preferences is central to CA and CTA while habitus is central to Bourdieu's theorizations about capital. The two concepts are the core of what must be changed in order for a person to change their lot in life. Nussbaum (2000) discusses the idea of preferences in depth in her book *Women and Human Development: The capabilities approach* as she cites many examples of women who accepted their situation as merely their "lot in life", or just the way things were. These examples range from lower pay to abusive relationships. Nussbaum (2000) explores in detail how the preferences of these women were constructed by the society around them and the experiences that were familiar to these women. This is similar to Bourdieu's observation that while people construct their own perceptions of their position in the world it is limited by structural constraints, or social structures, and that these perceptions are generally accepted as their norm because of the subconscious conditioning that each individual endures (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 131). Nussbaum (200) discusses the underinvestment that women and minorities make in the own human capital due to a belief that they cannot do what others can and that this internalization of a lower status is discussed by other scholars as well (p. 126). Alongside her review of other formulations of adaptation Nussbaum (2000) asserts that aspirations are adjusted to the achievable, by most people, and that this is based on the perception one has of their circumstances, and the lack of freedom one has to attain the other possibilities (p. 137). This conceptualization reinforces Bourdieu's

postulations and reasserts the fact that people lack a certain control, or freedom, in the perception they formulate of their possibilities. The idea of desire and its relation to preferences is reviewed by the Nussbaum (2000) with her conclusion being that informed desire, so desire which is cultivated without intimidation and disrespect, plays a key role in moving forward (p. 152). While Bourdieu does not attributes habitus and people's future orientations more so to the attainment of capital, Nussbaum includes the important aspect of individual desires and that value that it has in itself. Maintaining at its core her goal to provide a list of key capabilities, Nussbaum explains that informed desire is a necessary factor in defining this list (p. 153). The distinction is also made that while some people chose to return to tradition after being presented an alternative, they are not wishing to repeal the alternative, but rather to exercise their right to choose between the two (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 153). So once one has been shown an alternative and their adaptive preferences have been broken down, they may still choose to return the state that was proposed within the limits of their adaptive preference, and this is a completely valid exercise of personal choice. The attempts to break away from, or at the very least, expand adaptive preferences are not meant to trample tradition and beak down culture, but rather to offer alternatives and the opportunity for one to exercise their voice. Sen has at the center of his postulations the idea of value and the evaluative space. Within Sen's evaluative space are human acts and freedoms and the connection between the two (Sen, 1993, p. 33). The freedom to live the way one wants to is certainly dependent upon more than just personal choice. One's ability to achieve certain functionings is greatly influenced by public action and policy (Sen, 1993, p. 44).

Bourdieu (1990) discusses habitus as not only being produced by, but also reinforcing the class differences and societal norms and relates it to transformations and symbolic power. People construct an idea of their future orientations based on what they deem to be possible for them to achieve, and habitus, in turn, adjusts itself based on these predisposed possibilities that are considered attainable (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 64). Therefore, an individual's habitus is created by the predispositions that any person holds given their position in society. Bourdieu (1990) incorporates the idea of power alongside chance in what opportunities people truly have, so not only do people construct their future orientations based on their habitus and the chances that are offered, but also the long standing power relations which create categories of that which is possible or impossible to a certain person (p. 64). This means to say that based on one's social status they may either be offered more or less, better or worse, chances and that people are predisposed to know

which of these they will be offered, or which of these they deserve and will therefore not hope to obtain anything different. The conditioning within society makes very clear the balance of power and what opportunities are available depending on the symbolic power one possesses. Certain possibilities are only available to an elite group through their high amount of chances offered by greater connectivity with the world and other groups, the transformation of these possibilities into future realities is what perpetuates the predispositions of the present and especially those which are related to future orientation (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 64). Through the observation of groups with higher capital and connections obtain better chances, those in the lower class learn that this will never be possible for them and accept it as their lot in life to have fewer options. Certain possibilities and traits become associated with a certain social status which then conditions the individual to accept which of these possibilities and traits are available to them (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 131). This structuring is objective and subjective, and links people who possess similar traits or capitals with one another through the distribution of property and the conditioning which occurs within society via the employment of symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 133). People are conditioned to stop themselves from facing great failure in aspiring to something too great, they protect themselves by limiting their aspirations to what is most probable. By avoiding that which is improbable the habitus protects itself, the actor maintains their predispositions toward what will yield success (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 64). Overall, habitus cannot be delinked from society and the context that one exists in, the orientations one has towards the future and the opportunities that one has in life are predetermined by the position one holds within their society, which has definite implications for how one might construct future orientations.

In conclusion the concept that people adjust their future orientations and accept their reality as the norm through social conditioning is not unique to only one school of thought. The effects of this phenomenon can be seen in many different instances and studies highlighting the importance of the availability of options and positive examples. In order to combat the issues of adaptive preferences and complacency in future orientation realistic opportunities must be present and the path to achieve them must be clear. The preferences people have and the desires that they develop and pursue are related to much more than just individual choice. There are a plethora of structural factors which limit the development and/or achievement of these alongside the cultural and societal factors which guide one's assessment of what is possible and desirable. Undoubtedly people are influenced, to a certain extent, by the success and failures which they observe and the

norms that they are surrounded by. While individual choice is important and autonomous to an extent, it is not immune to outside influences.

3.3. Capital

This section will provide a review of some prominent theories about social and cultural capital. In order to understand the development of aspirations and the significance of this in relation to education an analysis of the relation between capital and social mobility are pertinent. The relationship between social capital and youth development has been described by many theorists, most notably in this section Coleman (1990) as well as Bourdieu (1980) will be explored.

It has been argued that capital plays an important role in youth development, but what is the connection between the two? Marjoribanks (1998) argues that social capital is the link which either allows a family's cultural capital to positively influence youth development, or not, and that this capital must be present specifically in the form of familial ties (p. 179). Therefore there must exist an interchange between youth and family member in order for the possessed capital to be of use to the other party. Marjoribanks (1998) argues that aspirations in themselves mediate the interchange between youth attainment and family background (p. 181). Morán (2004) also discusses the effects of family human capital in relation to the likelihood of the next generation to escape poverty. In his 2004 book Morán positions a lack of education as the primary factor within the Intergenerational Transmission of Poverty (ITP) model. This lack of human capital, or education, leads to a lack of material and economic resources, which in turn affects what opportunities these families are able to provide to their children. Without sufficient human capital a child's mental and physical development are jeopardized argues Morán (2004). Bourdieu and Coleman on the other hand focus more on the different forms of capital and how each of these play a distinct role in society and the structures that promote or inhibit development.

Coleman (1990) especially relates social capital as the interchange between other forms of capital and even decision making. Accordingly, individual actions, goals and interests are not independently formed (Coleman, 1990, p. 301). Meaning that there is a societal influence in the evaluations that individuals make, just as was discussed in the previous section. Coleman (1990) attributes the relationships among people, or the connectedness of their human capital, as social capital (p. 304) and goes so far as to say that when a society becomes less interdependent, and begins to need one another less, there

will be less social capital (p. 321). The interchange within society, which composes social capital, eases the attainment of certain goals which would have been more difficult to attain individually (p. 304). This idea lends itself to collective action and group working together towards an overall betterment or goal. Social capital cannot be understood without the implications of the society it exists as a part of. Social capital is interwoven into the net that a society creates and affects, or defines, an individual's actions within that society (Coleman, 1990, p. 302). These postulations that Coleman has laid out relate closely to the ideas of the previous section establishing the power of society and culture on one's actions, aspirations and values. The interconnectedness, the place that one finds them self within society, defines to a certain extent, or facilitates, as Coleman would describe, the possibilities one has and their future orientations.

The ease of accumulation of cultural capital is dependent upon the amount of cultural capital already possessed by a family (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 20). This is to say that cultural capital is cumulative and must be built upon itself, and as stated previously its acquisition requires a long time commitment. While cultural capital exists in different forms, some more objective than others, Bourdieu explains that social capital is only symbolic. Similarly to Coleman, Bourdieu's (1986) explanation of social capital reduces it to a network of relationships (p. 21). The volume of social capital that one possesses multiplies upon itself because it is the amount of intertwined connections one has, therefore any one connection increases a person's social capital by the amount of connections they possess, by bringing those into the first persons realm of connected persons (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 21). These relationships and connections however, are the result of nothing less than concentrated effort on maintaining them, therefore it is easy to see how social capital can be unevenly distributed (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 21). Not only is a person's access to social groups limited geographically and structurally, but also the effort and benefit which one can afford to give to a group of connections is dependent upon their existing capital and their time to pursue social capital.

Strong relationships between adult and child constitute social capital of benefit to the child. Social capital lies in the capability of the relation between adult and child to transmit from one to the other, and also in the capability of the relation to transmit a different range of content. (Coleman, 1990, p. 592) Even though there is potential for perversions, overall the relations between an adult and child should be regarded as an important source of social capital in the development of the child (Coleman, 1990, p. 593). Another source of social capital relies on closure, or the relationship between two adults

who have a relationship with the child. They are able to strengthen the social capital benefits for the child because the two of them can discuss and establish norms with one another, in relation to the child. The two of them will be able to observe the child in different circumstances and give each other feedback, while supporting one another. Closure can be established between two parents, a parent and a teacher, a parent and a friend, etc. (Coleman, 1990, p. 593). Coleman (1990) places a high emphasis on the structure of the family as an indicator of social capital which would affect secondary school achievements. He indicates having both parents in the household, discussion of personal matters and parents' interest in the child's attending college as positives for school achievement (p. 595).

3.4. Value of Education

The value placed on education by youth and their families is a commonly researched phenomenon. There is scholarship and research about the different types of value given to education, the instrumental and the intrinsic. Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki (2014) review the differences between these two evaluations of education explaining the instrumental value of education lies in its ability to provide future employment, the opportunity to help others and independence; meanwhile the intrinsic value of education lies in the empowerment it provides (p. 667). Increased educational attainment and value of education fosters heightened aspirations regarding future employment and independence (Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki, 2014, p. 667). Through many studies it has been found that these two evaluations are quite common all around the world and that there is an increasing need and want for education. Unfortunately, the value placed on education worldwide is not met with realistic opportunities to pursue it (Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki, 2014, p. 664). Multiple studies have found that youth believe that education is the key to a better future (Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki, 2014; Crivello, 2011) and that this is oftentimes due to youth's belief that education provides the opportunity to become a professional, which is a very common aspiration of both urban and rural youth (Crivello, 2011; Ansi3n et al., 1998; Ames, 2010). The concept of 'becoming a professional' is a particularly common phrase in Spanish speaking countries, as being a professional refers to careers which require post-secondary education, such as lawyers, professors, engineers, etc.. Among the perceived values of education another common one is the attribution of education to 'becoming somebody', which is studied in depth by Crivello (2011). As Crivello (2011) outlines, youth believe that obtaining an education will provide them the opportunity to a better,

more valuable life, one which supersedes the generation before them. There is an association between literacy and value, and the possibility of education to provide this increased value to youth is not only significant to youth themselves, but also their families.

In many rural families, such as the ones studied by Ames (2010) and Crivello (2011), the parents are key contributors to the youth's perceived value of education. Parents often push their children in order to help provide them with a better future, and education has become associated with the possibilities for a better future. Education is seen as providing realistic opportunities for the future which are better than those that the previous generation had, and in turn heightening aspirations towards higher education and professional careers. Due to these evaluations youth has begun to associate current and future well-being with school, with the chance to become someone (Ames, 2010, p. 33; Crivello, 2011, p. 404). The sentiment that education is the key to the future is reinforced to youth by the school system, teachers and families, giving it powerful meaning in youth's aspiration development (Ames, 2010, p. 34).

In nations which provide free access to public education it is clear that a high value is placed on education and an educated population. These school systems reinforce the value of education by promoting further studies and keeping youth on a trajectory to progress through, at least, secondary education. Specifically in Costa Rica there has been a trend in valuing the importance of education beyond the 6th grade, so valuing secondary education (UNICEF, 2013). Since the transformation of the telesecundarias to liceos rurales there has been an observable pride in attending these rural secondary schools, which was not as present at the telesecundarias (UNICEF, 2013). The students who are currently enrolled in secondary education have a new pride in their ability and fortune to obtain an education past the primary level. This stems from the relation of education to the possibility of a better life, a life unlike that of the previous generation (UNICEF, 2013). Rural families have begun to associate schooling more and more with the potential to obtain different and new types of work and to then provide better opportunities to the next generation. This possibility for different types of work signals the potential for higher paying work and less economic struggles. Education is oftentimes associated with higher economic capital in the future, and while many youth aspire to give back to their families, most parents only wish that their children will have an easier way of life than they did. The value for education in this context is still very much instrumental and rather than valuing education for the pursuit of knowledge, most parents and youth alike dream of a future with higher pay and less struggles. In Costa Rica many students describe their school as a

second home and see their professors as an extension of their family, but this is not to say that their authority is not respected (UNICEF, 2013). Professors and schools provide a comfortable environment where students are able to discuss and share and receive guidance from elders who understand where they come from. The value of the school itself is very high in rural Costa Rica and the support system it creates for most students is irreplaceable.

3.5. Criticism and Reflection

Among the criticisms of the CA there are a couple which are particularly interesting in this context. Some scholars wonder whether the CA is too individualistic and gives too little emphasis on the group context, and others question adaptive preferences and whether they are too dependent on the concept of rational actors. Another criticism of the aforementioned theories will be that of Bourdieu's class distinctions and the relation of this to adaptive preference and habitus. These criticisms all resonate with one another in the context of the current study. As has been described in Chapter 1, Costa Rican society is highly interconnected and the value of family and community are central to their culture. In a typical Costa Rican family it would be difficult, if not impossible, to delink the wants and needs of the parents, from the aspirations and actions of the children. Particularly in a small town like Sámara it is impossible to ignore the influence of not only family, but the whole community. Through this influence and contact one also increases their social capital through the ease of making connections. The interconnectedness of the society allows for people to make connections beyond the perceived limits of their economic and social capital. The distinctions that Bourdieu makes between different classes and the opportunities people have for increasing their capital seem less stringent in Sámara as there is common interaction between people of different classes. The connectedness and the size of the community involved in this study also allows for a crucial transparency. This transparency refers to the ability of one to see how people have obtained what they have. It is easy for one member of society to understand how another has increased their economic capital, for example. This transparency allows for people to pursue paths in life which will lead them towards heightened capital.

In this context the connectedness of society tends to lead to societal accountability, which is in line with Sen and Bourdieu's concepts of agency and habitus. The norms of Costa Rican society, and specifically the society in Sámara, greatly influences the individual actors. There is a sense of social accountability and the

connections between the individuals bind the people in a sense of community. While society is certainly playing a great role in constructing the norms that people follow and their future orientations, the effect tends to be more positive than the described by the aforementioned scholars. The sense of duty that a Tico feels to their family certainly provides them inspiration for their future orientations, however, it seems that generally this inspiration leads to higher aspirations and that the connections forged in normal Costa Rican life lead to more realistic opportunities. Although there is some distinction between the neighborhoods in Sámara and the sharp contrast between private and public schools, the potential for intermingling among different social classes is high, due to the size of the town and the surrounding towns. The sense of community among the Ticos binds them in a way which forges connections across social groups and allowing for greater future opportunities, or at least a look into how to achieve potential future goals. As described in Chapter 1, there is a sharp contrast between private and public schools, but I would argue that in this setting there is not a huge effect on social capital within the community. This is due to a couple of factors: Most of the students who attend private school are expats and therefore belong to a different demographic than the target group of this study, and the students of the private and public school still have plenty of intermingling outside of school time. The proximity of the schools to the town and the tendency of children to play outside with neighbors allows for youth to associate even if they attend different schools. Also, the current study focuses on secondary school and only one of the private schools provides secondary schooling. The amount of youth attending private secondary school is a very small number of the secondary school aged children in the area, therefore the effects of private schooling on secondary school youth are minimal.

4. METHODOLOGY

The current study employs an actor-centered approach, using qualitative methods, in order to describe the aspirations of rural youth. The self-reported and open-ended nature of the data allows for analysis of what youth themselves identify as their most important aspirations, along with what they identify as the most influential factors. The following section will describe the sample, the methods that were employed in order to gather and analyze this information, as well as the indicators and variables which were used to assess the findings of the questionnaire.

4.1. Research Design

4.1.1. Data Collection and Sample

This study is a small scale introductory study to youth aspirations. The participants for the survey were selected randomly according to their availability on the day of the questionnaire administration. The researcher contacted the high school in order to gain access to the sample group and, together with the administrators, assembled a random selection of students who would be available to answer the questionnaire. The sample is comprised of almost one third of the students at the given high school and four of the six grade levels. The open ended questionnaire was distributed to eighty-five students and each one of them completed the questionnaire, however, four of the completed questionnaires have been classified as discards since they do not yield sufficient information due to lack of detail in the responses. Overall, the study resulted in 81 questionnaires, which provide a broad range of answers of varying lengths to the questionnaire questions, representing a large proportion of the secondary students within the surrounding communities.

4.1.2. The Informants

It is not possible to understand the ‘Tico lifestyle’, or the lifestyle of a typical Costa Rican (Tico/Tica is the term for a Costa Rican), without understanding ‘Pura Vida’, or ‘the pure life’. Through the fieldwork and observations of the researcher the central concept of ‘Pura Vida’ became very apparent. At its core this lifestyle means always remembering that it could be worse, and that other people do have it worse, so enjoy and appreciate what you have. Ticos pride themselves on living a relaxed and fulfilling life. A life that is punctuated by family and community; and which is built around work and pure enjoyment. A typical Tico family devotes time to family meals and church attendance, parents are involved in their children’s lives and typically many generations live near each other. This description of Costa Rican life is easy to find from scholarly articles to

newspapers. As Osborne (2013) discovered, education has become a central part of Costa Rican life, and one that is valued. Although a true Tico finds value in relaxation and fun, there is still a high value placed on honest work and betterment of life, the true test of 'pura Vida' is learning to balance these components.

In the typical Tico family the father works to support the family and the mother takes care of domestic duties. Many times the family will eat breakfast and dinner together, highlighting the importance of communal time. During the day many stay at home mothers make and sell homemade goods such as empanadas, while also taking care of any children that are at home and cooking. Youth have compulsory, free, public education, which is generally only about three hours a day. During their free time most youth are found surfing or hanging out with friends in town. This abundance of free time in their youth helps to set up the 'pura Vida' mentality, but most youth take schooling quite seriously and can be found stressing about impending exams.

The value of the environment is also a large component of 'Pura Vida' and life in Costa Rica. Getting to enjoy the ocean, beaches, waterfalls and volcanoes is not taken for granted and the possibility to relax in nature is a key component in everyday life. A typical Costa Rican family, especially in rural areas, lives close to nature. This means that often times meals are eaten outside, and many parties are held in public outdoor areas. Afternoons at the beach are a way to spend time with the family and gather with friends. Environmental conservation is a key topic in schools, afterschool programs and small community based programs.

Overall the idea of not taking life or nature for granted is key to Costa Ricans. Attributing value to hard work, education, family and relaxation are pertinent in this society. Particularly in rural areas the sense of community and closeness to nature are readily observable.

4.2. Data Collection and Methods

The data used in this study was collected using two main methods during a two and a half month long study period. The researcher employed participant observation as a secondary source of data while working at a local after-school program. The primary source of data was collected via a questionnaire at the local high school.

4.2.1. Fieldwork

As a secondary, but nonetheless vital, source of data collection, observation was used throughout the data collection and research process. Participant observation was used

as a tool to gain in depth knowledge about the society and the cultural norms in order to contextualize the data. Observation of the target group helped to generate the questions for the questionnaire and specifically helped to guide the wording of the questionnaire. Furthermore, participant observation was vital during the implementation of the questionnaire in order to record information about the setting and atmosphere, as well as any concerns that the respondents had. The inclusion of participant observation as a data collection tool aids in validating the study by making the researcher more aware of the culture itself (Kawulich, 2005). Participant observation in particular, compared with non-participant observation, helps to engage with the potential informants and forge rapport. As described by Kawulich (2005) participant observation will give the researcher a more in depth understanding of the culture and the subject of the research allowing for fine tuning of the questions that should be asked and the language that will make the respondents most comfortable. Daily interaction within the target community help to build a contextualized base for the study and an understanding of the social norms.

The use of something comparable to Miles and Huberman's (1984) "contact summary sheet" allowed for a description of the questionnaire setting and reflection on the situation. What will be referred to simply as the questionnaire notes sheet provides information about the questionnaire environment allowing for analysis and comparison with the questionnaire answers. This note taking is a form of non-participant observation. As the students filled out their answers the researcher simply took notes on what was going on in the classroom and any significant observations in regards to the questionnaire.

The overall observations made and recorded during the study period have varying importance and significance within the study. Some observations were used to describe the context and provide general information about the community, while other observations were used to aid in the creation of a thick narrative description which sets the scene for the types of aspirers uncovered in this study. Observations have been employed in this study as a key component of the researcher's orientation to the context of the study as well as to supplement the primary data gathered in the questionnaire.

4.2.2. Questionnaire Design

As a source of primary data the current study uses subjective perceptions, which have been gathered through a questionnaire, in order to answer the research questions. The subjectivity of the responses provides a variety of possible answers to be analyzed. The survey consists of eight open ended questions and was administered in one high school to

85 respondents who were all present on the day that the questionnaire was completed. This source of data collection was chosen in order to give a direct voice to the subject of research. By giving voice directly to the youth and allowing them the freedom to respond in their own way, this study hopes to gain a more in depth and insightful understanding of the development of aspirations among the study group.

In order to answer the research questions, in depth, the questionnaire was chosen as the primary source of data gathering. Through employment of the questionnaire, a larger group of responses was able to be collected and analyzed than through alternative data collection, such as interviews. The questionnaires were printed in Spanish and responses were permitted in English or Spanish according to the respondent's preference. The key strengths identified in questionnaire data, which led to the selection of this form of data collection, are as follows: The questionnaire allowed for the students responses to remain anonymous (Mills and Wiebe, 2010, p. 770), which would minimize the chances of a respondent feeling potentially embarrassed about his responses. The questionnaire also allowed for each student to take as much time as needed to come up with well-articulated answers (Mills and Wiebe, 2010, p. 770). Getting the chance to see a question in its written form, rather than just hearing it verbally, allows for the respondent to better develop an in depth answer. Also, being able to write out your own response and edit it for clarification leads to well-thought out answers, rather than adlibbing during an oral interview (Mills and Wiebe, 2010, p. 770). The questionnaire used in this study employs open-ended questions meaning that there were no fixed responses and each respondent was able to provide their own answer in a blank space. The advantages of this type of questionnaire include: There are an unlimited amount of possible answers, they allow for creativity and detail, they allow insight into the thinking process of the respondent, they allow for the discovery of unanticipated responses and, as previously mentioned, the respondent can clarify and advance their responses as much as they would like (Neuman, 1994, p. 233). This open-ended style gave the students the ability to express themselves in the way that they found most appropriate, and therefore the answers to the questions are quite varied. Due to the fact that there was no set of responses that the students could choose from the respondents voice is very apparent within the responses. This personal voice helps in the creation of a narrative for the respondents, which is useful during data analysis.

The questionnaire itself (Appendix A) was comprised of eight short answer questions and demographic information such as age, grade, sex and locality. The questionnaire was organized in a way which led the respondent from basic factual

information (the demographic information), to more abstract themes (such as values and goals). This format is the preferred format according to multiple research methods scholars (Desai and Potter, 2006; Neuman, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 1984). This design was employed with the hopes that students would at least answer the concrete questions even if they were not inclined to provide in depth answers to the more abstract questions. This primary set of questions regarding demographic data and parent's education level are important in providing information about the variable present among the students and to help with classification of the respondents during data analysis.

The questionnaire was administered during one day at the high school, in three separate rounds. These three rounds were comprised of three different grade levels and took place in two separate classrooms, during school hours. The environment of each round was slightly different depending on the grade level and schedule of the students. In the first round the students were on a free period and were ushered into an unused classroom in order to complete the questionnaire, where as in round two the students were all about to leave their class for a free period and therefore filled in the questionnaire prior to being dismissed for their break. The schedule of the students certainly seemed to influence the quality of responses given. The students who were on their free period already seemed to take the answering of the questionnaire less seriously as there was no teacher present in the classroom. This group of students provided less sufficiently filled out questionnaires, which led to some of the questionnaires in the sample to be lacking answers to certain questions. Within each group there were some respondents who did not answer all of the questions, and also some students who answered all questions with close attention to detail.

In order to answer research question number one, the survey included a straightforward question about future goals and aspirations, along with a more candid question asking the student to describe how they imagine their life in 15 years. In regards to the second research question, the respondents were asked directly who most influenced the aspirations that they noted. The demographic data and other information from the questionnaire is also used to create groupings and compare variables among the respondents who identify similar types of aspirations. The demographic information also plays a role in answering the last two questions regard socioeconomic status, alongside the information requested about the students' parent's education and work. These variables allow for the construction of different groups of students according to their socioeconomic status.

The variables present among the sample group have been used to compare and contrast the responses of the respondents. These variables help to formulate conclusions about the factors affecting aspirations by providing concrete groupings for the different types of respondents. Age, grade level, parent's education level, sex and locale are the main variables which are assessed in this study. By having access to these variables the researcher is able to formulate generalizations based on the main theoretical concepts in the study and comparing them with the variables. The following section will describe these concepts in more detail.

4.3. Key Indicators of Aspiration Development

The questionnaire questions were designed in a way which incorporated the concepts of the main theories discussed in Chapter 3. These three theoretical concepts, capital, future aspirations, and family values will each be described in the following subsections as the indicators which influence the development of aspirations.

4.3.1. Capital

In order to measure the types and amounts capital available to each respondent, the questionnaire included three questions specifically related to this theme. Respondents were asked to describe the level of education of their parents and the type of work their parent's do, in addition to providing information about their locale of residency and their grade level. The last component is significant because when identifying grade level students mark for example 7-1, meaning that they are in the 7th grade, for the first time, versus 9-2 meaning they are in the 9th grade, for the second time. The level of education of the parents and the type of work in which they engage has a great impact on the capital available to the child. The geographical indicator gives further insight into their economic level by allowing the researcher to understand what type of neighborhood they live in and the types of capital which would be readily available to them due to their locality. Proximity to Sámara yields more chances for intercultural experiences and the possibility to forge social capital through the closeness of the community and the availability of programs for youth such as the after school programs provided by La Asociación CREAR. CREAR is a non-profit after school programming operating out of the center of Sámara providing free, or low cost, after-school classes for children. Some of the available courses are arts and crafts, girl's empowerment, and English classes.

4.3.2. Future Aspirations

The main goal of the research is to find out what types of aspirations are prominent in this community and the overall presence of CTA. The ability of students to describe their future aspirations provides insight into the level of CTA present. In order to construct the types of aspirers found within the sample, respondents were asked directly about what their aspirations are, and also less directly by requesting that they describe how they imagine their life in 15 years. These two questions allowed for the respondents to voice their future orientation in a way that allowed for personal interpretation. The open-ended nature of the questionnaire allowed for respondents to be creative with their answers to these questions and to not limit them to any specific types of aspirations. Respondents were also asked to describe how they foresee themselves obtaining these aspirations. This component allows for insight into the realism of the respondents aspirations and whether they them self have thought about the necessary steps to achieve their aspirations.

4.3.2 Family Values

Furthermore, the questionnaire divulges on a description of the respondent's values by directly asking them about their personal values and the values of the family. Additionally, respondents are asked to describe what school means to them, consequently providing information about the value that each respondent places on school. The theories about value of education point to the importance of educational value in the development of aspirations and the development of more ambitious aspirations. Past research has found Costa Rican's to place a high value on education, and therefore, the study hopes to supplement these findings by providing further data to support this evaluation. The description of values will aid in the construction of generalizations about the sample group and will serve as a variable when analyzing the types of aspirations that the youth have identified. Personal and family values may play a role in the types of aspirations that youth identify.

4.4. Limitations of the Study

Although the questionnaire was the preferred source of data collection for this study, there are, as always, some limitations posed by this mode of data collection. The main concern is the lack of opportunity to probe and ask follow up questions. During the process of data analysis some themes were uncovered which would have been interesting to divulge more thoroughly, but due to confidentiality and the nature of the questionnaire in general it is not possible to ask follow up questions. In order to have had the opportunity

for follow up probing the questionnaire would not have been confidential. This is particularly evident in some of the questionnaires which failed to provide much valuable information. Had these questions been asked in an interview format the interviewer would have had the chance to probe if the respondent was not providing much information while answering the questions. Another tool which could not have been employed due to the nature of the questionnaire is what Gibbs (2007) describes as respondent validation, which is just a follow up to check understanding of the respondents answer to a question (p. 95). This method can be employed during an interview, as the interviewer can simply repeat back an answer and ask if they have understood it correctly; however, such affirmation is not possible during a confidential questionnaire. Subsequently the next limitation of the questionnaire is the uncertainty of whether the respondents were being truthful, particularly in the questions about demographic data. When asked about their parents' education level some wrote that they did not know, which leaves a gap in the data, but others could simply have made up an answer if they were not sure of the true answer. In addition to making up responses, it is also possible that respondents did not put much thought into some of the answers, and therefore, providing a more simplistic view of reality. Some of the respondents failed to answer the questions in a way that provided useful data, by responding 'none' or 'I don't know' to multiple questions. While this is a valid exercise of a respondent's right to not answer if they do not want to, it takes away from the potential data. When analyzing the questionnaire data, it is possible that some of the answers have been misinterpreted due to the researchers on biases and presumptions. Of course the researcher always tries to be objective and to analyze the data through a neutral lens, but it is impossible to be completely objective, and therefore, the data is subject to the researcher's perspective. As described by Gibbs (2007), reflexivity in research is inevitable no matter how hard the researcher tries to be objective; their personal background will always have an effect on the analysis and design of qualitative research (p. 91). This perspective is inherent already in the creation of the questionnaire, but this is an aspect of almost any study. The researcher them self is designing the questions in a way that they assume will most competently give them the answers to their research questions. This search for specific information can be a source of bias in the wording of the questions and the question selection in general. Alongside the development of the questionnaire is the bias of the data analysis. The researcher is coding and analyzing the data in a way that would best describe the phenomenon that they are interested in, which could lead to missing out on other interesting trends or data that may have emerged from the study. Due

to the sample size in this study, the questionnaire was unable to provide many concrete classifications of the respondents. While the study group was relatively small, there was a substantial amount of variables among the respondents which makes it difficult to make generalizations based on the variables. This is particularly true about the locality of respondents, there was too much stratification among them to draw any finite conclusions about how locality affects, or doesn't affect, aspirations. The second notable limitation of the questionnaire was that it has become evident that there was some confusion about how to answer one of the survey questions. Not many, but a few respondents did not grasp the meaning of question #6 "Describe how you imagine your life in 15 years". A few respondents interpreted this question as "Describe your life when you are 15 years old". The phrasing is more ambiguous in Spanish than it seems to be in English, so although the researcher tried to explain that question during each round of questionnaires, some respondents still interpreted the question incorrectly.

4.4. Ethical Considerations

Ethics are a key consideration when doing any type of research and it is important to use ethical tools when gathering data in order to foster relationships of trust and maintain the comfort of the research subjects. This study took into account ethical considerations, prior to, and during, the entirety of the research period, such as invasion of privacy, informed consent and confidentiality (Neuman, 1994, p. 254). Prior to conducting the questionnaire the researcher spoke with the school administration in order to obtain permission to speak with the students and conduct the questionnaire. On the day of the questionnaire administration, there was an introduction given to each group of respondents explaining the purpose of the study and introducing the researcher along with the research goals. Respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire, but they were also assured that they did not have to answer the questions if they did not feel comfortable doing so. This introductory process allowed for the assurance of informed consent from the respondents which is stressed by many authors detailing research methods (Gibbs, 2007; Neuman, 1994; Lewis-Beck et al., 2004). The questionnaires were to be completed anonymously, and although demographic data was included in the questions, there was no reporting of names or any information which would allow for identification of the respondent. Prior to administering the questionnaire each respondent was asked to answer the questions to the best of their ability and if they did not feel comfortable answering a

question, or the questionnaire itself, they could leave it unanswered. The students were encouraged to ask questions if they did not understand a question and were also given as much time as they needed to answer the questions. One of the advantages of the open-ended questionnaire in this situation is that each respondent was able to write as little or as much as they want, or so to say reveal as little or as much as they want to. This helps to maintain the comfort of the respondent by giving them control in the information which they wish to share. The questionnaire was administered and collected by the researcher in order to maintain the anonymity of the respondents. The administration of the questionnaire at the school provided a safe and comfortable location for the respondents. The election of the school as the questionnaire location, during school hours, helped to maintain the ethical grounding of the research by not placing the students in a compromised position traveling to and from the questionnaire.

The data collected through personal observations is reported in an anonymous way and is only used to supplement the findings and context of the research. The situations that were observed were ones where the researcher was welcome, whether as just an observer, or as a participant. All of the data collected during the research period has been kept confidentially by the researcher and not shared with anyone else.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE FINDINGS

In order to gain a full understanding of the aspirations of, and the limitations to them among this study sample we must remember that each of their stories matter. First two short narratives based on observations during the study period in Sámara, Costa Rica will be described.

The first narrative is based on a typical middle class family, we will call the man Ricardo. Ricardo and his family lead an average life in Sámara, their home is quite average, there are four children and the parents are married. Ricardo drives 45 minutes to Nicoya every day, for work, while his wife stays at home to care for their youngest child who is only two years old. The other children attend school regularly, with the exception of the oldest who would be in secondary school, but has a child. Ricardo's home has three bedrooms of which one is rented out to a non-family member, expat, who works in Sámara, and a living room/kitchen. Everyday Ricardo's wife prepares breakfast and dinner which are eaten together outside on the front porch, before 7 am. Although the lifestyle in Sámara and Costa Rica in general is very relaxed, it is quite common for people to be up early in the morning. By 6 am you hear roosters crowing, dogs barking and cars bumping down the unpaved roads filled with potholes, so it is no wonder most people are getting out of bed. Ricardo works long hours and is not at home a lot. His wife on the other hand is generally home, or at least in town, and she takes care of all of the domestic duties other than burning the trash. Trash burning is reserved for their son or Ricardo himself. Ricardo's wife not only works as an *ama de casa*, or housewife, but she is also involved with the local primary school, which two of her children attend, helping to organize events such as end of the year parties and other meetings which happen during the school year. Ricardo's family is fortunate to have an extra source of income, Ricardo has built a small apartment building in their front yard, which has two small studio apartments, which are rented out. The housing market in Sámara, and Costa Rica overall, is quite expensive due to foreign investment for tourism, which means that Ricardo is able to collect quite a good profit from these two units. Many people, especially from the United States, have begun to buy vacation properties in Costa Rica and particularly along the coastlines causing housing prices to increase. Ricardo's children are all well behaved and educated, his middle daughter is often sitting on the porch working on homework with friends, while his son would be more likely spotted surfing at the beach. On surprisingly many occasions, during the two and a half month study period, Ricardo's daughter was at home on a weekday

helping her mother with chores or just playing, and when asked why she wasn't at school, she would simply respond that school was cancelled that day.

The second narrative explores another typical family whose circumstances are slightly different. In El Torito, the town just next to Sámara, Isabel, an 8 year old, and her younger sister Daniela, who is only 5, are two of the most frequently attending students of the CREAR after school program. Daniela's mother bikes from El Carrillo to El Torito every afternoon to bring Daniela to the after school program, where Isabel meets them directly from her school. Isabel and Daniela's mother is very thankful that there is a program which supplements their in school learning and hopes that her children will learn English. Isabel is extremely outgoing and sharp, while Daniela is still a bit reserved. Isabel and Daniela's mother has not completed any education past primary school and she does not have a steady job. Same goes for Daniela's father, but they have both enquired about adult English classes and are very attentive to the fact that their children will receive any education that is available to them. Isabel's father on the other hand does have a job, but he has also not completed any higher education. While the primary data collected does not include either of the families discussed above, we can imagine that the stories of the respondents have parallels with these examples. The following section will detail the types of aspirers that have been uncovered in the data.

Now that a bit of insight has been given into the typical life in Sámara it is easier to begin to imagine what kinds of aspirations might be prominent, and what some of their limitations might be. These two depictions of typical families in the area highlight the typical family structure and values which are pertinent in the area. The following section will give a detailed description of the results of the data and also the relation of this data to the theories which were described in Chapter 3.

5.1. Descriptive Data Analysis

The data analysis began with grouping and coding of the responses based on different variables and questions on the questionnaire; once groupings were completed, more in depth content analysis was employed in order to make comparisons of the results. The following section will describe this process in more detail.

To begin the analysis of the questionnaire data, several different groupings were made in order to compare variables of interest. The names of the groups were assigned by the researcher based on the types of goals or aspirations that occur in the responses. The first set of groupings were based on the type, or types, of goals the respondent described in

the questionnaire. These goals were stratified into five main groups, which then had their own subgroups, these five groups are: 1. More than One Goal, 2. Term-Oriented Goals, 3. One Goal, 4. "This or That" and 5. Discards. This type of grouping allowed for stratification of the responses, but it maintained a lot of detail and therefore made broader speculations more difficult. The subgroupings of the first round remained very true to the actual responses of the respondents, but were a bit too constricting and did not allow for the generation of broader types of respondents. In order to illustrate the sub categories more thoroughly some example responses are demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1 Goal Type and Example Response

<i>1. More than One Goal</i>	1.1.Conflicting	"my goals are to be a doctor and a lawyer"
	1.2.Family&Career	"as a great businessman with a wife and kids"
	1.3.School&Career	"my goal is to finish my studies... I see myself as a veterinarian"
	1.4.Career&Personal	"to get my bachelor's and travel the world"
<i>2. Term Oriented Goals</i>	2.1.School&Career	"finish university and be able to become a doctor or a lawyer"
	2.2.School&Career&Family	"To get my bachelor's, have a career, have a family"
<i>3. One Goal</i>	3.1.Career	"To be an OIJ Police Officer"
	3.2.Personal	"to help my family"
	3.3.Education	"I want to study medicine"
<i>4. "This or That"</i>	4.1. This or That	"my goal is to be a police or a nurse"
<i>5. "Discards"</i>	5.1. Discards	"none"

In category 1. the first subcategory is conflicting. Any goals classified as conflicting are goals which would be very difficult to reach simultaneously. The other classifications in section 1. are simply defined by the example responses found in Table 1. The criteria for section 2. Term-Oriented Goals is that the respondent categorizes their goals in an ascending order, showing steps which need to be accomplished in a timely order. Responses placed in section 3. only identified one specific goal, while respondents in section 4. identified two or more options, of which, they would like to accomplish one. Responses who were classified in section 5. did not provide adequate answers to the

questionnaire questions as can be seen in Table 1, one respondent simply wrote “none” as an answer for what his goals are.

After grouping responses by the goal type, other stratifications were made as a result these groupings. The goal type was analyzed based on variables such as: Sex, grade level, municipality, the respondent’s parents education level, how the respondent planned to achieve these goals, and self-identified sources of influence. An analysis was made of the students who were repeating a grade at the time of the questionnaire and what they identified as their goals/aspirations. Once the appropriate amount of comparisons were made based on goal type, the analysis moved on to comparing the parent’s education level with: What education means to the respondent and municipality. Each grouping that was made was stratified by sex and/or grade level in the initial phase in order to account for the potential correlation between sex and response type or age and response type.

Subsequently the questionnaires were rearranged into completely new categories in order to create a narrative type description of the results. These new sets are meant to provide ideal types and they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The grouping of the respondents in this way is merely a tool used by the researcher to describe the types of aspirers that are present in the sample group. The questionnaires were organized into four new categories: *Los Optimistas*, *Los Mandamás*, *Los Modestos*, and *Los Realistas*. These classifications were created without taking into consideration the initial groupings and were then analyzed based on the same variables as the initial groupings. Ultimately the overlaps between the two classifications were taken into account and the similarities between the groups were analyzed. Since the initial grouping was not taken into account while creating the narrative types, responses from grouping 1.2., for example, landed in more than one narrative type.

While the initial data analysis included many stratifications relating to multiple variables and the classifications that were made, the more interesting results stem from the narrative types. The broader and more descriptive data analysis method has proven to yield more comprehensive data, rather than the very specific stratifications from the initial analysis. Considering the size of the sample, it is difficult to try and stratify the results based on such specific variables. Many of the variables had such huge variation among the respondents that no specific results can be connected to a specific variable, therefore the data that will be presented is based on the descriptive and narrative style developed in the second phase of analysis. This descriptive style of representing the data helps to give a

more general picture of the population and will draw more upon the observations made by the researcher during the study period.

Through the aforementioned procedures the following demographic data was unveiled, which will be important to discuss in order to describe the demographics of the sample. There are a total of 85 completed questions retrieved from four rounds of administering the questionnaire, although some of these questionnaires were considered discards since the questions were answered insufficiently. The respondents represent students from grades 7, 8, 9, and 10; with ages ranging from twelve to seventeen. The significance of the grade levels represented is that all of the respondents are currently pursuing secondary education and have therefore completed their primary education. The majority of respondents, 36 of them, are currently in the seventh grade, followed by 21 ninth graders, 15 tenth graders, and finally 13 eighth graders. Each of the respondents is currently enrolled at *Liceo Rural Sámará*, while nine students are repeating a grade. The 85 respondents represent twelve municipalities around Sámará, ranging in proximity to the school anywhere from one to over fifteen kilometers.

5.2. Data Analysis Results

From the primary data two sets of distinct types of aspirers were constructed, these groups reveal different types of aspirations and often times have different sources of influence for how these aspirations have been constructed. The initial group is made up of: “More than One Goal”, “Term Oriented Goals”, “One Goal”, “This or That”, and “Throw Away”. The second stratification of the results resulted in the following groups: *El/La Optimista* (the optimist), *El/La Mandamás* (the top dog), *El/La Modesto* (a) (the modest), *El/La Realista* (the realist).

The initial data analysis allows for the creation of five types of aspirers, these five types of students describe the realities within Sámará and what is important to these people. These five types of goals were described in Section 5.1. Sámará and the region of Guanacaste are also known for their agricultural production, which has historically been their greatest source of revenue. As discussed previously, the current sources of revenue within the region come primarily from tourism and also agriculture. Not a single respondent identified rural work as an aspiration and most respondents identified professional careers which would require university level training. These findings are surprising because many students described their parents as having rural jobs such as farming and fishing and only a few students described their parent’s education as

university level. Very few respondents identified work in tourism, although many parents are working in the tourism and hospitality sector, from bars and restaurants to hotels. This trend seems to indicate a generational move away from what the local areas have to offer. Most of the respondents in this sample indicate a desire for a future outside of where they are growing up. University level studies would certainly require a relocation from Sámara (and the surrounding towns) and professional work will be challenging to find within the local areas. This means that pursuit of professional work would likely require a relocation similarly to university level studies. Just from observing the local way of life it becomes clear that in many families the mother works as an *ama de casa*, which is in line with the results from the questionnaire where almost half of respondents identified their mother's work as *ama de casa*, as can be seen in Table 2. Of course in some families both parents are working and it seems that this is most likely in the lower and upper classes, rather than the middle class. Most respondents whose mothers work outside of the home were either working in the professional field, for example as a lawyer or principal, or then in the restaurant or cleaning business. There seems to be a clear link between having either both parents working as professionals, or then both working in non-salaried, or lower wage positions such as cooking and cleaning. The families in which the mother works at home tend to have a father working in a middle class position such as forestry or construction. This shows that the average middle class family prefers to have a stay at home mother, while in the lower class this is not possible in order to make ends meet. In the higher classes where both parents are professionals the family can afford to hire help for domestic duties or childcare, if needed, and therefore both parents are able to work full time.

Table 2 Mother's Employment Status

	n	%
<i>Ama de Casa</i>	40	49
<i>Professional</i>	8	10
<i>Business Owner</i>	2	3
<i>Hospitality/Cleaning</i>	20	25
<i>Other</i>	6	7
<i>N/A</i>	5	6
Total	81	100

More than half of the respondents (48 of 81) indicated that their parents have highly influenced their goals, and more specifically many respondents indicate that their mother has an impact on their goals. To go more in depth about the implications of the

results in Table 2 a description will be given of some of the responses based on what their mothers work is. Of the two respondents whose mothers are entrepreneurs one owns a shop and the other owns a hostel with her husband. The shop owner's daughter is a *Realista* and she cites her mother as her most important source of inspiration and her idol. The hostel owner's son is an *Optimista*. His hopes to travel to every country land him in this category and he says this goal is heavily influenced by his parents. It is likely that in the hospitality business he and his family have met many travelers and have been inspired by their stories.

Meanwhile, of the eight respondents whose mothers are professionals half are male and half are female. Three of the male respondents are *Realistas* with specific careers in mind (physical therapist, professor, film director), while one is a *Mandamás* who wants to be a powerful businessman. The females are split into *Realistas*, *Optimistas* and *Modestos*. All of the females want to obtain a four year degree, however their secondary goals differ. This is a good example of respondents who can fit into more than one category. The *Optimista* in this group wants to obtain a bachelor's degree, however she also wants to travel the world helping those in need.

In order to better understand the categorizations of the respondents the following section will describe each category in detail. *Los Optimistas* have in depth dreams and goals which are complicated by their breadth. The classification is not to mean that these goals are unattainable, just that they are goals that will be quite difficult to achieve and require not only commitment, but ideal circumstances. Many of *Los Optimistas* want to travel the world, have a nice/pretty home and an idealistic family. For example, one *Optimista* sees herself with a daughter "who plays soccer and speaks English", while another sees herself living in London as a technical engineer. Many of the male *Optimistas* imagine a life as a professional athlete, whether it's surf, motocross or soccer, all the while having another career such as architecture. Many of *Los Optimistas* know that they specifically want a house, car, spouse and children; while others focus more on their personal goals to travel with a best friend, or travelling alone. The commonality between all of *Los Optimistas* is that regardless if their dreams include a family or friends, or just themselves, they have more than one dream. These dreams are also ambitious. However, most of *Los Optimistas* have identified important and realistic ways in which they would be able to achieve their goals. Two examples will be given to highlight this point. One female respondent imagines her life in 15 years as:

"Completing my studies, travelling around the whole world with my husband (and kids) who has achieved his dream of becoming a pilot"

She explains that she will accomplish this by “studying and supporting my husband and his dreams”. This respondent also attributes the possibility to obtain a career to schooling. A male respondent describes his main goals in life as “riding bulls and having a KTM motorcycle” and he plans to achieve this goal by “joining bull riding groups”. These both sound like ambitious goals, but the respondent has identified a rather logical pathway to achieve these goals.

So, while the goals of *Los Optimistas* are ambitious, most of them seem to have an idea of what it would take to achieve these goals, whether it be realistic or not. *Los Optimistas* is comprised of more females than males, but they represent a range of ages and localities. All of *Los Optimistas* identify school as a place to learn for the betterment of their future, while most do not identify a source of inspiration other than themselves.

Los Mandamás are similar to *Los Optimistas* in that they too have ambitious goals however, what distinguishes them from the previous group is that these respondents have a specific focus on success. *Los Mandamás* want to be the best, the greatest, great or very successful at whatever it is that they identify as their main goal. *Los Mandamás* are predominantly female and all of the respondents in this category come from a family where the parents have completed only their primary education, or then have not even completed their primary education. The most common goal among *Los Mandamás* is to be a “great” business man or engineer. The two exceptions to this trend are one female who aspires to become a very successful lawyer and a male who aspires to become a “great IT technician in a great videogame company”. Among *Los Mandamás* only two come from a family in which both parents work, and the rest have a stay at home mom. All of these respondents identify studying and progressing through the educational system as the key for achieving their goals and only one male did not identify his family as influencing his goals. This male respondent aspires to become the IT technician; and his father is a fisherman, while his mother is a waitress. While this respondent does not identify his family as influencing him in his goals, he does identify school as providing the “opportunity to become someone better in life”.

The next group of respondents, *Los Modestos*, are quite different from the previous two groups. These students have goals which focus on their personal well-being. They just want to be someone, a good person, an independent person. *Los Modestos* make up the smallest group of respondents. Most of these respondents identify school as a place that helps to improve their life and although they do not have specific scholarly or career oriented aspirations, they also identify studying and school as the way to achieve their goal

of becoming someone. Only one respondent identified family as influencing them in this aspiration, however another respondent has an underlying familial motivation. This eighth grade respondent writes that his main goal is to “be a good person, humble and without vices, better than what is my father”. While he does not specifically identify anything or anyone as influencing him in this goal, it is apparent that he is inspired to not be like his father and has therefore taken something from his father’s way of life and decided he will strive to become something different. This in itself is a source of inspiration even if he doesn’t recognize, or identify, it himself.

The largest group of individuals are *Los Realistas*. The individuals within this category have a set of main goals which are more or less defined and they have identified ways in which to achieve them. One third of these students come from a family where the parents have either entered, or completed, secondary school and most of them identified a future goal which is much more specific than in the previous groups. Some examples of the more specific career oriented aspirations are pediatric doctor and physical therapist. This group has formulated more specific and realistic career goals than other groups. Some of the less specific career aspirations were still realistic and focused such as police officer, or then the same career as a parent, such as professor. Surprisingly the majority of *Los Realistas* were in the seventh grade, belonging to the youngest of those included in the study, meaning that many of *Los Realistas* have just begun their secondary schooling. Of *Los Realistas* whose parents had not proceeded onto secondary schooling some still identified specific goals such as getting into university, medical examiner and English teacher; however more commonly the identified goal was broader such as having a career. An interesting trend among *Los Realistas* is the amount of female respondents who aspire to become veterinarians. All of these girls come from families where the parents have not continued onto secondary education, identify school as important to their goals and identify “hard studying” as the key to achieving the goal of becoming a veterinarian. They all identify the first step in progressing towards this aspiration as completing school. These girls do not share a commonality in age nor locality, however most have a father working in construction. Many of the respondents from other categories could also fall under the *realistas*, for example many of *Los Modestos* have realistic and well thought out goals however they have been grouped into their own category due to the commonality on their goal type.

Los Optimistas obviously wanted to embark on journeys all around the world and to travel far away from Sámara. Exposure to foreign people and ideals is easy to observe in

Sámara, since it is a tourist town, yet it is quite uncommon to meet an average local who has travelled outside of their own country. The thirst for foreign experiences must be a dream that is cultivated through exposure to constant tourism and changing people in town since it is unlikely that personal experiences have led to this. The theme of family is common among all categories of respondents. When getting to know Sámara and Costa Rica as a whole it is easy to see that family plays a key role in daily life. Costa Ricans certainly travel, just as people do all over the world, but it is certainly an upper class phenomenon to be able to take a family trip outside of the country.

When combining the two classification types it is clear to that there are some other distinct trends among the types of aspirers. All of the respondents who have conflicting goals are part of *Los Optimistas* group and all of them have parents who have not completed, or not even started, secondary education. The goals that these individuals have identified would be very difficult to achieve simultaneously due to the fact that they each require a large time commitment or a very specific skill such as becoming a professional surfer and a lawyer. However, all of the respondents who identified conflicting goals are also among the youngest respondents, each being 13 years old and one of these respondents also happens to be one of the few respondents who is repeating a grade. All of *Los Optimistas* have more than one goal, except one respondent whose goal is to become a professional soccer player.

Most of the term-oriented goals from the first classifications fall under *Los Realistas*, which keeps in with the theme of realism. These respondents have identified a tiered system in which they plan to achieve their goals, such as “first to pass all the levels of high school and then college”. This description shows a realistic expectation of how to become an accountant and in which order the goals would be achieved. Interestingly enough, among *Los Mandamás*, those who want to be great, or the best, there is only one respondent who identifies term-oriented goals which will help him achieve his goal of becoming a “famous and prestigious businessman”. The rest do identify studying as a key, but they fail to list any steps in between now and the ultimate goal of become great.

All of the respondent who fall into the personal goals classification also fall into *Los Modestos*. These respondents have identified their main goals and aspirations as bettering themselves, but generally without much detail in how they would do so. Most of these respondents just want to be better or have a better life. A few of the respondents also identified a career or educational goal alongside their personal desires to achieve a better life.

The majority of respondents identify school as an important part of life and attribute the chance for a better life and/or a career to schooling. Additionally a small group of respondents described school as being a second home to them, among other positive impacts. These respondents wrote something along the lines of “it’s like a second home, because they help you study and to be able to be someone later”. Of these respondents only one had a parent who had completed secondary schooling and although these respondents fall under three different narrative types, they have each identified aspiring to have a professional career. Only one respondent identified school as a waste of time when asked what school means to him. This respondent also identified aspirations such as “owning a KTM motorcycle” and having “a pretty girlfriend”.

In regards to observations made during the study period and the results of the survey it is interesting to note that there are very few respondents who identify an aspiration which harnesses creativity, or art. There are a few respondents who want to be film directors, or artists, and some architects, but in general most responses do not include any artistic aspirations. During the study period and observations made while working with some of the younger children in the area it was clear that creativity was not fostered in school. Most youth were very hesitant and confused when they were asked to be creative or make up something on their own, and they felt much more comfortable simply copying the instructor. This lack of creativity and artistic aspirations is most likely due to the lack of arts education in school and the overall lack of importance placed on the arts and creativity. As the UNICEF (2013) study noted, there are not art classes offered at most rural secondary schools and that this is an area which should be expanded through the use of workshops (p.60). The after school program which is offered in El Torito focuses on art and the youth are very excited to get to explore this area, however, unfortunately many of the students from the secondary school have not attended such programs due to their locale of residence.

5.3. Theoretical Grounding of Results

Before relating the results back to the theories discussed in Chapter 3 a description of the study’s ability to answer the research questions will be provided. In order to answer research question number 1, what the aspirations are of rural youth, the respondents were asked to identify what their most important goals and aspirations are. The primary research question in this study is very straightforward and hopes to provide information for future policy development. Supporting youth aspirations is a key in promoting aspiration

development. By providing the necessary tools for youth to attempt to attain their aspirations, they are able to create more realistic goals and not to feel the sense of helplessness that their goals are unachievable. As trends of urbanization grow globally it will be increasingly important to understand what rural youth want and need in order to find their niche in a new type of society. In order to provide rural areas with the proper tools to foster youth development, and more specifically aspiration development, we must first understand which tools are wanted.

According to the social capital theories discussed in Section 3.3. the family and school play crucial roles in youth's development of and employment of social capital, which in turn leads to higher educational attainment and the development of more realistic aspirations. Therefore, the inclusion of information about family within the questionnaire has provided compelling information about the impact of these relationships to youth's development of aspirations. The information about parental educational achievement and employment point to two key factors in the development of social capital. Primarily it offers information about the potential social capital retained by the family by placing them within a certain socio-economic sector. Secondly the ability or inability of a respondent to answer these questions shows something about the communication about education within the family. As Bourdieu (1990), Coleman (1990) and Marjoribanks (1998) all demonstrate, in order for a family's social capital to be of benefit to a child, there must exist strong familial relations. A parent's possession of social capital means very little for the development of a child if it is not shared through active and meaningful communication. Therefore, it is not surprising, and in fact reiterates the findings of previous research that the educational attainment of the parents has an impact on the type of goals that youth set. The findings from these questions help to answer research question number two, which asks what the most influential factors are in aspiration development. These questions provide information about which factors are influential to youth whom are in the process of developing a sense of future orientation and defining their own goals and aspirations. The impact of social capital is one which is not necessarily identified by the respondents themselves and is therefore extrapolated from the data the respondents provided about their families. The students were also asked to simply explain what or whom has most influenced their aspirations. The last question of the questionnaire asked what the respondent's main goals and aspirations are and who/what has most influenced these. The answer to the second part provides direct information for answering research question number two.

Alongside these direct sources of information, the demographic data and values of the respondent also help to create classifications about the factors which influence aspirations. The possible link between family values and aspirations is one which is explored in the questionnaire data. Furthermore, the respondents own evaluation of school and education is an important factor in future aspirations. This evaluation weighs heavily upon the type of aspirations that one might develop. Whether or not someone gives high value to schooling will likely determine whether or not they will continue with post-secondary education. There are also differences in the perceived values of school and potential aspirations. Meaning that while some believe education and school have intrinsic value, others see it as the source of future economic gain. These distinctions tend to play a role in aspirations as well.

Moreover, the research questions were developed using the theories used in this thesis, therefore the information which was provided has theoretical implications. The present data provides support for and description of the theories and their key components, which were described in Chapter 3. The theories not only provide a way to analyze the data, but the data supports these theories and allows for inferences to be made about the study group itself as well as wider demographics.

5.3.1. Developing Capacity to Aspire through Education

The basis of CTA, being rooted in the capability approach, focuses on the capabilities of people, the things that people are truly able to accomplish in their given circumstances. The CTA is a capability, or capacity, which is unevenly distributed and must be harnessed in order for it to reach its full potential. A person's CTA is affected by many factors and their context is extremely important. The current study highlights the potential of this population to aspire. The respondents have a developed capacity to aspire, while some a more realistic one than others. This finding goes along with Posti-Ahokas and Palojoiki (2014) who found that higher educational attainment leads to heightened aspirations. The fact that the sample group is currently pursuing secondary education puts them in an advantaged position. The respondents are exposed to some amount of future planning and educational resources through their pursuance of secondary education. The results of the study also reinforce Appadurai's (2004) finding that the more connected a society is the more likely aspirations will be developed and attained. The interconnectedness of Sámara allows for members of society to help one another in the pursuance of aspirations and in the development of them by allowing for transparency of the means which are necessary to achieve certain goals. The structure of the local society

provides the youth with many different reference groups whom to mirror their aspirations off of and become inspired by. This feature allows for the youth to overcome the possible limitations of their social class or culture and to aspire beyond the most simplistic aspirations.

Further postulation about the societal effects on the CTA are not possible to form based upon the data collected. Had there been a chance for comparison with a sample from a different community it would be possible to explore this part of the CTA. What we can see however is that the societal structures and norms in Sámara have fostered an environment which allows for the development of high reaching aspirations and has thus far positively influenced aspiration development in youth.

5.3.2. Overcoming Habitus and Adaptive Preference

Overall there seems to be quite a bit of interconnectivity among the different classes and the sense of community is quite high in the area. According the field notes and personal observations Sámara and Costa Rica as a whole is made up of a people who do not discriminate much among themselves, at least. The class differences within Sámara, especially among locals, are noticeable in material goods, but people live in such a close vicinity to one another that there is not such a huge stratification of class among different neighborhoods. Of course the further away you get from Sámara, the more common it is to find people of lower economic standing, but these groups still intermingle and work together. Considering that only a very elite group attends private schools, the population who attends public school has this commonality which ties them to one another. In the public school system these students are equal and they are faced with similar issues and toolsets.

Among the sample it becomes very clear that female youth aspire to have careers. Not a single female omitted some type of formal employment among her other aspirations. However, in the previous generation, the parents of these students, most women work as stay at home mothers. Most of the mothers of these children do not have a career outside of the home. This phenomenon is a reflection of two things, primarily it reiterates the importance of the family unit in Costa Rica, and subsequently it highlights the main class distinction which is present in this society. As mentioned previously, families in the upper class, meaning families where both parents are working as professionals in a salaried position, can afford to pay for childcare or other domestic help, which therefore allows for both parents to work. The most common situation, or the middle class, consists of a family where the father works a full time job and earns enough that the family can subsist off of

his income. Therefore, the mother in this case would generally stay home in order to take care of the children and the home, so that income wouldn't be wasted on these things. Families in the lower class, meaning families where neither parent works a salaried and/or permanent job, cannot afford to only have one source of income and therefore both parents work jobs where they receive an hourly wage. From the latter stems the quite common situation the one might come across in El Torito, or any other town, that a daughter would take care of her younger siblings while the parents are working. Oftentimes this daughter is herself a child, not even a preteen, but the responsibility of the younger siblings falls on her shoulders. This can sometimes interrupt school schedules, and most certainly does affect out of school activities.

Although, according to the data, it seems that females have re-adapted their adaptive preferences and habitus to align more with upper class ideals, it is uncertain whether these aspirations will become reality or not. Most respondents, both male and female, expressed hopes to have a family: children and a spouse, alongside a career. The key to promoting and fostering this trend will be to provide realistic opportunities for youth to pursue their current aspirations and to guide them in the direction of realistic aspirations.

5.3.3. Education as Capital

While the findings of the study in regard to effects of capital on youth's aspirations were not particularly conclusive, they do reiterate the interconnectivity discussed previously. Previous studies have shown that low family social capital tends to lead to lower aspirations and educational attainment, and that this is one of the key factors in the cyclical nature of poverty. However, it has also been posited that while family social capital might be lacking, youth are able to make up for this through other relationships, such as those with teachers. As Coleman (1990) discusses, the more the members of a community depend on one another, the stronger the social capital is in that community. This is in line with the findings of the study, as it seems that the capital that the youth have access to, is in a sense shared, and that the experiences that they each have are linked in a way that overcomes class differences.

Table 3 Aspiration Type and Parent's Education Level

		Aspiration Type							
		Optimistas		Mandamás		Realistas		Modestos	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Parent's Education Level	Primary	3	21	7	100	17	55	3	43
	Secondary	10	71	0	0	8	26	3	43
	Post-Primary	1	7	0	0	6	19	1	14
	Total*	14	100	7	100	31	100	7	100

*Only 59 respondents provided this information

The main conclusion that can be drawn from the study in regards to social capital is the effect that parental education level has on youth's aspirations. While most respondents had multifaceted aspirations, the ones which were most developed and included the most realistic information about their attainment, tend to come from youth whose parents have a higher level of education. Table 3 shows that the majority of respondents whose parents have attended post-secondary education fall under the *Realistas* category, while in the *Mandamás* category most respondent's parents had only received primary level education. In many cases the youth who experience lower social capital at home were less likely to have in depth plans for how to achieve their goals and were less likely to identify specific future goals and aspirations. The *Optimistas* have the highest amount of parents who have received secondary education. Recalling the classification of the *Optimistas* it is clear that this significant level of education has inspired these respondents to set great goals. However, these respondents have not identified realistic pathways for achieving these goals. This might be due to the fact that they do not have a direct example of someone who works as a professional, for example. Therefore, they do not know the necessary steps to obtain that level of work, although they believe that it would be a beneficial. Of the *Optimistas* most also desire to travel the whole world, and again they may have heard about the benefits and glamour of international experiences, but don't have any direct and realistic examples to follow. Table 4 shows that half of the respondents whose parents were professionals fall into the *Realistas* category. As stated previously, some of the other aspirers did also have realistic and well thought out goals, but were placed into their ideal type due to other factors. This helps to explain the respondents who are in different categories, but still have professional parents. Of course the categories that have been made also have exceptions. This finding is in line with previous postulations that parent's social capital, formed in part by education and employment opportunities, has an effect on children's aspirations and future attainment.

Table 4 Percentage of Aspirers with Professional Parent

	n	%
Optimistas	2	14
Mandamás	3	21
Realistas	7	50
Modestos	2	14
Total	14	100

5.3.4. Value of Education as Indicator of Aspirations

Accordingly to Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki (2014) this study found that the many of the respondents attribute the value of education and schooling to future career opportunities and the possibility to become someone. As demonstrated in Table 5 the majority of respondents cited an instrumental value for schooling and education, alongside the value of learning, which also influences the types of aspirations that were common. Most respondents believe that education is the necessary tool for attaining their aspirations and therefore they also cited studying and school attendance as steps towards goal achievement. Another key theme among the data was the want to help others, and most frequently to give back to family members. This is also in line with Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki (2014) who cite one of the common instrumental values of schooling to be the potential to give back in the future.

Table 5 Value of School by Percentage of Aspirers

		Aspiration Type							
		Optimistas		Mandamás		Realistas		Modestos	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Value of School	<i>Employment/Professional</i>	5	28	1	10	8	19.5	2	18
	<i>Help Others</i>	2	11	2	20	2	5	1	9
	<i>Independence/Follow Dream</i>	1	5	0	0	5	12	3	27
	<i>To Learn</i>	6	33	3	30	18	44	2	18
	<i>Become Someone</i>	4	22	4	40	8	19.5	3	27
	Total	18	100	10*	100	41	100	11	100

*one respondent says it is a waste of time

Crivello's (2011) in-depth study about 'becoming somebody' resonates with the findings in the present study. A very common response among respondents was the desire to 'become somebody' (of value, or a better person). As can be seen in Table 5 among *Los*

Modestos many respondents who desired to become somebody attributed this goal to education, or even more specifically, to becoming a professional. As described in Section 3.4. the desire to ‘become a professional’ is very common among youth, and this particular phrasing is very common in Spanish speaking countries (Ames, 2010). The tendency of the respondents who aspire to ‘become somebody’ to attribute this possibility to ‘becoming a professional’, or completing school in general, aligns with past findings like those of Crivello (2011) and Ames (2010).

Another common desire of the respondents, and as Table 5 shows especially among *Los Modestos*, is the attainment of dreams and personal independence. As Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki (2014) review, one of the commonly perceived instrumental values of education is the promise of independence. Among the respondents in this study the majority cited desires to either distinctly ‘become independent’ or then desires related to independence such as ‘own house’, ‘own car’, ‘own family’. Therefore, this study reinforces the intrinsic valuation of education for providing opportunities for future independence, as past studies have shown.

Similarly to the CTA this value ascribed to education allows for the youth to overcome some of the symbolic limitations set on their aspirations. While they may face conflict in how to achieve their goals the value of education that has been embedded in the respondents translates to heightened aspirations for their future careers and education. This value works as a factor which breaks through the horizons that may have existed in this community in previous generations. Education has become a valuable asset, whether it was that way before or not.

The final note about value of education within this study is the occurrence of the aspiration to help others. Most commonly respondents desired to help their parents by giving back to them, some respondents noted that they would like to give their parents a nice house, while other respondents wanted to help those who are in need. Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki (2014) noted that one of the common intrinsic values of education was the desire to help others, which has been reinforced by the findings of the current study.

Overall the aspirations of the respondents can be summarized by saying that most believe education provides the potential to have a career in the future, and that through this career they will be able to help others, become independent and/or fulfill other future desires such as travelling. The attribution of these potential future trajectories to education is in line with the studies cited in Section 3.4. and reviewed again briefly here about the

value of education. This study has reaffirmed the values that youth tend to attribute to education.

6. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

6.1. Summary of the Findings

In summary the open-ended questionnaire administered at Liceo Rural Sámara was completed by 85 respondents. During the analysis stage of the study it was clear that some of the respondents did not provide sufficient information to be included in the study. The responses which were complete and thorough provided some interesting insights into what the aspirations are of the youth in this area. The sample group had many variables which makes it difficult to draw many finite conclusions, however this questionnaire was an interesting first step into discovering what kinds of aspirations and goals are present in the community and which factors affect the development of these goals and aspirations.

The present study set forth to analyze the aspirations and formation of aspirations of rural youth in Sámara, Cosa Rica. Due to the sample size and restrictions of the research time frame the data did not provide much more than substantiation to the current studies. In line with previous research this study found that family plays an important role in future aspirations and that the social/human capital of the family are key players. The study did however provide some insights into the specific context. According to the data analysis results it is clear that Costa Rican society is interconnected and the social and human capital within this context is very much a common commodity. Members of Costa Rican society are able to work well together in order to harness and promote the development of their society, which allows for transparency of goal attainment providing insight, to youth, of the pathways for success. Additionally the study supplemented and reaffirmed previous findings about the prominent aspirations among rural youth. Oftentimes rural youth aspire to professional jobs and a better life through schooling. Many respondents attribute the possibility of a better future, and the possibility to have a career, to education and the completion of school. The data from this questionnaire provides a description of the different types of youth aspirers which one can find in rural Costa Rica and these types reinforce findings from past research.

6.2. Reinforcing the Past and Looking Toward the Horizons

Overall the findings of this study provide useful information, which reinforce many current theoretical postulations for assessing future policy decisions in Costa Rica

and other rural settings. The findings also provide new insights into the symbolic and concrete horizons that all aspirers face. Being that Costa Rica has a large population of rural youth and specifically rural students, studies involving rural youth are pertinent. The newly formed rural secondary schools require analysis in order to uncover whether they are functioning in the most effective way possible, and which aspects of these schools need to be developed further. The perceived underinvestment in rural areas should not be allowed to have a negative impact on the future orientations of rural youth. This study allows for insight into the opportunities which should be provided for the youth in this area.

As many researchers cite (Eg. Schoon, 2006; Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki, 2013; Ibrahim, 2011), aspirations are among the most important indicators for future educational and occupational attainment. Therefore, the study of and promotion of aspiration development is pertinent to youth development. Whether one is of the belief that education has intrinsic value and that an educated population is important in its own, or if they believe that education is important for an effective workforce, aspirations play a key role. The study of aspirations and its links to future attainment has become the focus of many studies in the recent years and the expanding literature in this field is helping for assessing development and educational programs.

The development of realistic aspirations is important in order to help youth formulate their future orientations and to understand the pathways to attainment of these futures. In order to minimize the probability of failed expectations more support must be provided for aspiration development and attainment in rural settings. This study found that most students from rural areas have aspirations which are not confined to the true opportunities in their area. Most students aspire to do and become things that require resources from outside of Sámara. The increased interculturality of Costa Rica as a whole and specifically Sámara has left much of the youth yearning experiences outside of their own country and region. Most of the youth in the area do not want to pursue careers which are typical to the region, such as agriculture and tourism, and will therefore have to branch out and relocate in order to follow their dreams. This result follows the trends of research in the U.S., such as the large scale study performed by Irvin et al. (2011). Due to changing economic conditions globally it is becoming more common for rural youth in middle to high income countries to aspire to non-rural work.

Through personal observations and other studies performed in Costa Rica (Eg: UNICEF, 2013; Osborne, 2013; Twombly, 1998) it is evident that education is highly

valued by society. According to Suárez (2008) it is also one of the best performing countries in Latin American in terms of education. The current trends in Costa Rica show a move away from traditional forms of employment, such as agronomy, and towards professional careers such as engineering. According to Torres and Morales-Gómez (1992) and Carnoy and Torres (1992) educational investment is not a high priority by the state. However it seems instead that investment in education is not the problem, but rather the uneven dispersal of these benefits and the lack of investment in the most pertinent aspects of education (OECD, 2016). During the research period it became evident that people in Guanacaste consistently feel that their region receives far too little governmental inversion especially in comparison to the amount of revenue the region provides in the tourism sector. The 2016 study performed by UNICEF shows the pertinence of developing rural education in Costa Rica. While strides have been made to ensure quality education even in less densely populated areas, there are still significant setbacks (UNICEF, 2016). In order to promote the development and pursuit of aspirations it is important to continue to invest in rural education and specifically the system of *liceos rurales*. The system of *liceos rurales* is new and therefore studies which take into account their students are pertinent in improving the system and promoting future success for *liceos rurales* in general and also rural students. According to the UNICEF (2016) study the most important improvement for *liceos rurales* will be to incorporate more community specific programs. This improvement can only be achieved through the involvement of the pupils and their opinions on what programs are needed. A look into what students from each region aspire to and want to achieve will help in the development of community specific programming. The current study is an initial step towards what should be done to incorporate local opinions in the development of school curriculum. Additionally other community members need to be involved, such as the parents of current and future students.

The UNICEF (2016) finding that education beyond the sixth grade is valued more now than in the past is in line with trends towards urbanization and modernity (Chant, 1991; Norloos and Steel 2016). Due to increased tourism and what Norloos and Steel (2016) refer to as “lifestyle migration” the demographic makeup and demands of Guanacaste are changing. There is less demand for agricultural work and more demand for jobs in other industries, especially tourism. However, due to this “lifestyle migration” there is also an increase in property prices and rents which is creating a new demand for higher income work. These trends call for a restructuring of opportunities for those in the labor market, and those who will soon be in the labor market. It is no wonder that more and more

youth are aspiring to high income, professional jobs, when they observe these phenomena of increasing prices and lower demand for agricultural work. These shifts have also caused a shift in traditional values, which have started to place a higher demand on women entering the workforce. Although it is still very common for a middle class woman to be a stay at home mother, there is an increase in the amount of women who want to work and the amount of families who support, and promote, female education and aspirations (Twombly, 1998). In order to support these trends the basic educational infrastructure must meet the demands of the population.

The future implications of the trends described above and the results of this study are the increased need for community specific programs which foster the repetition and trial for CTA, which is needed in order to promote aspiration development and achievement (Appadurai, 2004). In line with the findings of the 2016 UNICEF study, more programs need to be made available to secondary school students, which are based on their local needs and desires, and which will help these students foster their CTA and to attempt, or explore, how to achieve their aspirations. These students must be provided realistic opportunities to develop and test their aspirations, to find out what is really required of one to attain their aspirations. Without these opportunities youth will potentially face disappointment in finding that the necessary resources are not available to achieve their set aspirations. Having the possibility to see the necessary steps in achieving a goal and getting the opportunity to attempt these steps early on will help in the development of realistic aspirations. Developing the educational curriculum accordingly to community needs is crucial in order to not foster the development of unrealistic expectations, which would be impossible to attain due to structural constraints (Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki, 2014), such as lack of work in the idealized fields that youth aspire to (Chant, 1991). As the UNICEF (2016) study stipulated there needs to be an increase in developing community specific *talleres*, or workshops, which would help to educate students on viable skills for the future. These workshops should be designed with the community's input in order for them to provide the best skill sets possible.

Another crucial component of continuing to develop CTA among youth will be to keep them motivated and invested in their education. The rate of rural students who complete secondary school and move on to higher education is very low, especially in comparison to the urban regions of Costa Rica (UNICEF, 2016). This is partially due to the difficulty in making the transition to higher education from these rural areas and also due to factors which pull students from school earlier, such as having to work or failing a grade

level (UNICEF, 2016). Similarly, Irvin et al. (2011) found that while rural youth aspire to higher education and more urban work, which is a rather new trend, these youth are also less likely to have the needed resources to successfully attain these aspirations. Rural schools are less likely to have highly qualified staff and to be able to adequately guide students toward post-secondary education (Irvin et al., 2011). The policy described earlier in regards to failing a grade at Liceo Rural Sámara is detrimental in fostering motivation among students. Giving a student who has failed a grade so much time off from school only further alienates them and pushes them towards other activities in their free time.

This study serves as a tool to reinforce the findings of past studies in the fields of aspiration development, education and culture of Costa Rica. The findings in this study are closely aligned with previous findings about the types of aspirations that youth have and the key influencers of these aspirations. The aspirations of becoming a professional and becoming someone have been cited in multiple previous studies of rural youth (Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki, 2014; Ames, 2010; Crivello, 2011; Ansión et al., 1998), alongside the data about the value that education has in being the key to the future and a better life (Ames, 2010; Crivello, 2011; Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki, 2014), which are phenomena that are found in the data from this study as well. Coleman (1990), Morán (2004) and Marjoribanks (1998) all cite the relationship between family social capital and educational goals/achievement. This theorization is confirmed through the findings that youth whose parents had a higher level of education were generally able to formulate more realistic aspirations. However, this data contradicts some of Coleman (1990) and Bourdieu (1980) theorizations about the importance of social capital and the ability of social capital to be transmitted as fluidly as it seems to be in this context. This finding is not unusual in descriptions of Costa Rican society, as it is a culture where community is key, but it does contradict the importance of that the two scholars place on family social capital. Through this data it is clear that youth in Sámara are able to share, in a sense, the benefits of the social capital that they possess. Class differences are not as sharp as they are in Bourdieu's (1980) descriptions, and youth are able to intermingle and reap the benefits of the social capital of the community as a whole. The interconnectedness of the community in Sámara helps to aid youth by providing a transparent view of the pathway to many different aspirations, rather than limiting them to only the examples within their family.

Unlike past research (Eg. Hanson, 1994) this study did not uncover significant differences between male and female aspirations. Past studies have shown a tendency for females to have higher educational aspirations than their male counterparts, however this

data does not show major differences in the types of aspirations that male and female youth have. Each of the categories of aspirers include males and females showing that among this sample the stratification of aspiration types is spread among both sexes. While there were certain aspirations that were only identified by one sex, such as males aspiring to become professional athletes and females aspiring to become veterinarians, there was still no significant differences in the level of aspirations based on sex. Both sexes identified a wide range of aspirations ranging from ones which require high levels of education to ones which were not fully developed.

Horizons are an inevitable part of any decision making process and the foundation of these horizons can have a profound effect on perceptions of what is and is not possible. The limits, or horizons, that influence the youth in this study were mentioned briefly in Chapter 5, and can be classified into the following categories: class, cultural, and spatial. These horizons serve to both limit and expand the aspirations of this group. The concept of a class horizon is not new, but has been described in many different ways in previous scholarship. Pulling on Bourdieu's (1990) theories of habitus this class horizon seems to be a daunting limiting factor, while other studies such as Osuji (1976) confirm that class horizons aren't necessarily as staunch as Bourdieu would have us believe. In the current study class horizons seem to follow the trend of the latter study. The socioeconomic status of the family does not prove to limit the aspiration horizon of the youth proposing that, as Osuji (1976) posits, the reference groups available to these youth, for these youth to emulate, are not limited by their socioeconomic status, or their class. The cultural horizons in this setting behave in the same way. The high value of education within this society enforces the importance of educational aspirations and the tendency to want to take give back to the family results in heightened career aspirations. On the other hand, the present spatial horizons produce a limiting factor to the cultural horizon. In this society closeness to family is very important and while high career and educational aspirations are present, there is some doubt that all of these aspirations will be realized due to the necessity of relocation in order to achieve them. It is quite rare for Costa Ricans to emigrate and seek work outside of their country as only 2% of Costa Ricans resided outside of Costa Rica in 2000 (OECD, 2016). This limitation is the result of the duality between culture and space. The concept of space translates into a very real factor when one must consider leaving their family in order to achieve their goals, and the pull of family values and culture make the decision to pursue certain aspirations a difficult one. With the influence of tourism in Sámara it is clear that there is a pull to explore areas outside of Guanacaste among the

respondents. However, the very concrete spatial horizons that exist will prove these aspirations difficult to achieve.

Finally, the data provides sufficient answers to the first two research questions which are detailed in Chapter 1, while leaving the other two questions less adequately answered. The findings show a clear pattern that the most prominent aspirations are to become a professional, or to become someone, which provides an answer to the first research question. There are variations of the two answers, of course, but the main themes that come across are the ideas of professionalism and having a better life. In answer to question number 2 respondents clearly identify school and education as playing a major role in the possibility to achieve these aspirations. Many respondents describe school as the way to a better life and something like a second home. The most common source of inspiration for their aspirations was cited as family, sometimes a single parent or a more distant relative, but almost always the influencers were family members. For some respondents these people were so influential that their aspiration was derived from this family member's occupation, while other times the influence was negative and served as an example to be something completely the opposite of that family member.

Furthermore, from the data we can see that the parent's education and employment do play a role in the types of aspirations developed by youth. Specifically the ability to formulate term-oriented aspirations seems to be related to higher educational level of the parents. The clearest correlations between parent's education and youth's aspirations appear among the very and very low level, rather than the middle. Respondent's whose parent's had very low levels of education seemed to have less concrete and/or realistic aspirations, while respondent's whose parent's had very high levels of education were able to formulate aspirations with clear pathways to attainment. This provides some information which helps to answer question numbers 3 and 4, however, it is difficult to make any further postulations about the specific effects of socio-economic level due to a lack of data and too small of a sample group to show real commonalities. The questionnaire did not provide sufficient information about the socio-economic status of a family to formulate any more cohesive results.

Overall the questionnaire outlined the importance of school among rural Costa Rican youth and their intentions to attain professional careers in the future. The leading source of inspiration for future orientations is family and family is also a key aspiration among youth. Most respondents identified a professional goal alongside the desire to have a family which reiterates the importance of family in this setting. The instrumental value of

schooling is very clear in this context as most respondents attribute school completion to a good career and successful future. The sample provides information which demonstrates these youth's ability to formulate and work towards future aspirations. The presence of CTA in this context has clearly been developed by insisting on the instrumental value of education.

7. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion this preliminary study of rural youth in Costa Rica has begun to shed light on goal and aspiration development among the selected demographic. This study has reinforced much of the previous literature on youth aspirations and has started to fill in the gap in regards to Costa Rican youth. As the trends of urbanization and the importance of education permeate the global environment rural studies become more and more pertinent. The development of infrastructure to support the current aspirations among young Costa Ricans will be pivotal in the development of their future orientations. By supporting youth in not only developing, but also pursuing aspirations, the road will be paved for the development of more in depth, realistic and new kinds of aspirations. In order to minimize situations of failed aspirations and let downs for youth it is important that the development of aspirations and goals is not only supported, but also developed in a realistic manner. As many studies in the past have shown, without realistic opportunities to realize goals and aspirations many rural youth feel let down by their education prospects.

7.1. Implications of the Findings

Through this study it has become more evident that Costa Rican society fosters a supportive environment for aspiration development and provides support to youth through strong community ties. The CTA is present among rural youth in Costa Rica and therefore the development of aspirations and CTA in this setting will require a focus on fostering opportunities to practice CTA and to test the pathways to attaining aspirations. The capability of the study group to formulate aspirations on their own, and in many cases to explain the steps to achieving these aspirations, is a great indicator for the future orientations and potential of this group. Many of the limiting factors to aspiration development have already been overcome in this context and therefore the next important step will be to foster the attainment of aspirations. Since rural Costa Rican youth have strong senses of agency and future orientations what they will need in order to make their aspirations a reality is the infrastructure to not only pursue and try out potential aspirations, but also to achieve goals along the way. Access to materials and resources within rural schools should be developed and the pathways to successful attainment of aspirations must be presented clearly.

The findings of this study supplement many previous studies in regards to the types of aspirations which are prominent among rural youth and the value that Costa Rican society places on education. The limiting factors and horizons that the youth in this study

face provide new conceptualizations of the push and pull factors of aspiring and the impact that context truly has on an individual. This study hoped to contribute more than it was able to, to the literature which relates social capital and socioeconomic status to aspiration development. The limitations of the data did not allow for in depth postulations about the relationship between these factors. Future studies in the same context will be helpful to guide education policy in Costa Rica and improve the opportunities available to rural youth. The instance of rurality in Costa Rica is one which cannot be ignored and therefore it is a vital consideration in policy development.

The indications of this study also resonate with global trends to improve access to opportunities in rural areas. Rural studies have become an increasingly important topic in the development field and the actor centered approach employed here is particularly effective in assessing the wants and needs of rural populations. These kinds of assessments will help to provide infrastructure and guide policy which will provide access to more diverse opportunities in rural areas. These studies can also provide insight into the preferences and trends of rural populations.

7.2. Recommendations for Further Study

The need for studies about rural youth is expanding as the global economy develops and reshapes societal structures. Fostering equal attainment and aspiration development among rural and urban youth is pertinent to the equality of opportunities and future orientations of youth. In order to substantiate this study further research should be done within the same context. Completing a comparative study among rural and urban Costa Rican youth would allow for more insight into the challenges and differences that the two areas face. While this study had as its aim to fill in the gaps of the literature that is focused purely on rural youth, there are some elements that would be clearer in a comparative study. The complaints in Costa Rica that there is not enough investment in rural areas would be better substantiated with an in depth comparison of the two settings. This would allow for insight into what is lacking in the rural setting. Additionally, a larger sample would allow for more conclusive findings, especially in terms of some of the control areas. A larger sample would allow for more conclusions in relation to the control variables such as age, gender and locality. Due to the small sample size it is difficult to make generalizations based on these factors. According to previous research it seems there should be more clear differences between male and female aspirations and perhaps a larger sample size would provide more detail on this subject.

In terms of Appadurai's CTA this sample proves to have harnessed this capacity, which reflects on the culture of this society in enabling and encouraging aspirations. The key in this context, therefore, is to continue to foster an environment where youth can practice, test and develop their CTA further. The sample group shows that they have been introduced with concepts of future orientation and many even cite the possible pathways to attain their aspirations. The data from the study does not provide concrete information as to whether the students perceive their aspirations as attainable or not. However, no respondent made note of feelings of difficulty in attaining their future aspirations.

In order to further validate this specific study it would have been beneficial to perform follow ups with questionnaire respondents and include this information in the research. An initial follow up would have allowed for probing on some of the questions within the questionnaire, while a secondary follow up could be conducted in a few years to see where the respondents are in terms of aspiration attainment, or to see how their aspirations have changed. This would have provided information about the pathways available to these students to attain their goals and aspirations. Additionally this would have revealed whether the assumption that females are moving away from tradition is correct or not in this setting. While many female youth have aspirations to work it is impossible to know whether this aspiration will hold up against cultural norms in the future. This type of research would have of course compromised the anonymity of the questionnaire and is of much larger scope than what the present study allowed for.

Furthermore, in order to practically guide policy more research should be done in regards to the resources which need to be developed. The community, including youth, parents and school staff, should be asked about what resources are lacking and which ones are needed. This would help to highlight the pathway to successful CTA development and testing. This questionnaire does not provide information about the youth's opinions on whether their aspirations are realistic, or whether they believe that they have the tools to attain these aspirations. Nor does it provide information about the possible failed aspirations which youth have already endured, or which they may have witnessed around them. Asking about failed aspirations, or aspirations which the youth find unattainable would give insight into the available pathways in the community. Information in line with these ideas is pertinent for future development in regards to education and infrastructure.

Alongside this information it would be interesting to ask for the youth's perspective on the networks of social capital with which they interact. In order to substantiate the

assumptions about the interconnectedness of the society and the potential for transparency in attainment pathways, the youth's perception of these concepts is necessary.

In order to draw more cohesive postulations about the effects of socio-economic status, and to further test the theories described in Chapter 3, it would be necessary to include more information about the socio-economic status of the family. A survey could be administered to the families of the students in order to gather more precise data about employment, income, family size and family makeup. According to past studies about the effect of socio-economic status on educational attainment and aspirations, the size of the family is very important alongside the makeup of the family. The latter refers to the home situation and the people who are actually present in the same home as the youth. This information will be necessary in order to further test the impact of socio-economic factors on youth aspiration development and to provide supplemental information to the present theorizations.

Overall there is a need for continued research on the factors which affect youth aspirations in both rural and urban settings, in order to assure the development of beneficial infrastructure and the elimination of structural constraints to aspiration attainment. Youth studies are pertinent in the field of development as youth represents the group whose future trajectory can most be affected by current policy decisions. Just as the CA and CTA highlight, structural constraints limit the incidence of equality in attainment, and the identification and elimination of these constraints should be at the core of future policy decisions. Research should be focused on the negative and positive factors influencing youth aspirations in order to effectively eliminate the limiting factors and to support the development of the factors which positively affect youth aspiration development and attainment.

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APPENDIX A

Original questionnaire in the language of distribution.

Datos Personales: Grado _____ Edad _____ Sexo _____

En cuál comunidad vive usted? _____

1. Nivel de educación de sus padres:
2. En qué trabajan sus padres?
3. Cuáles valores son los más importantes para usted? Y su familia?
4. Qué significa la escuela para usted?
5. Usted participa, o ha participado, en algunos cursos de CREAR? Cuáles?
Por qué usted ha participado en estos cursos?
6. Describa cómo usted imagina su vida en 15 años.
7. Explica cómo usted va a lograr las cosas que ha escrito en el número 6.
8. Cuáles son sus metas y aspiraciones más importantes en la vida? Qué o quién ha influido más estas metas y aspiraciones?

Original questionnaire translated to English.

Personal data: Grade _____ Age _____ Sex _____

In which community do you live? _____

1. Parents education level:
2. What kind of work do your parents do?
3. Which values are most important to you? And your family?
4. What does school mean to you?
5. Do you participate, or have you participated in, any CREAR programs? If so, which ones?
6. Describe how you imagine your life in 15 years
7. Explain how you will accomplish the things you listed in question number 6.
8. Which are your most important goals and aspirations in life? Who or what has influenced these the most?